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# **AFRICAN BIRD CLUB**

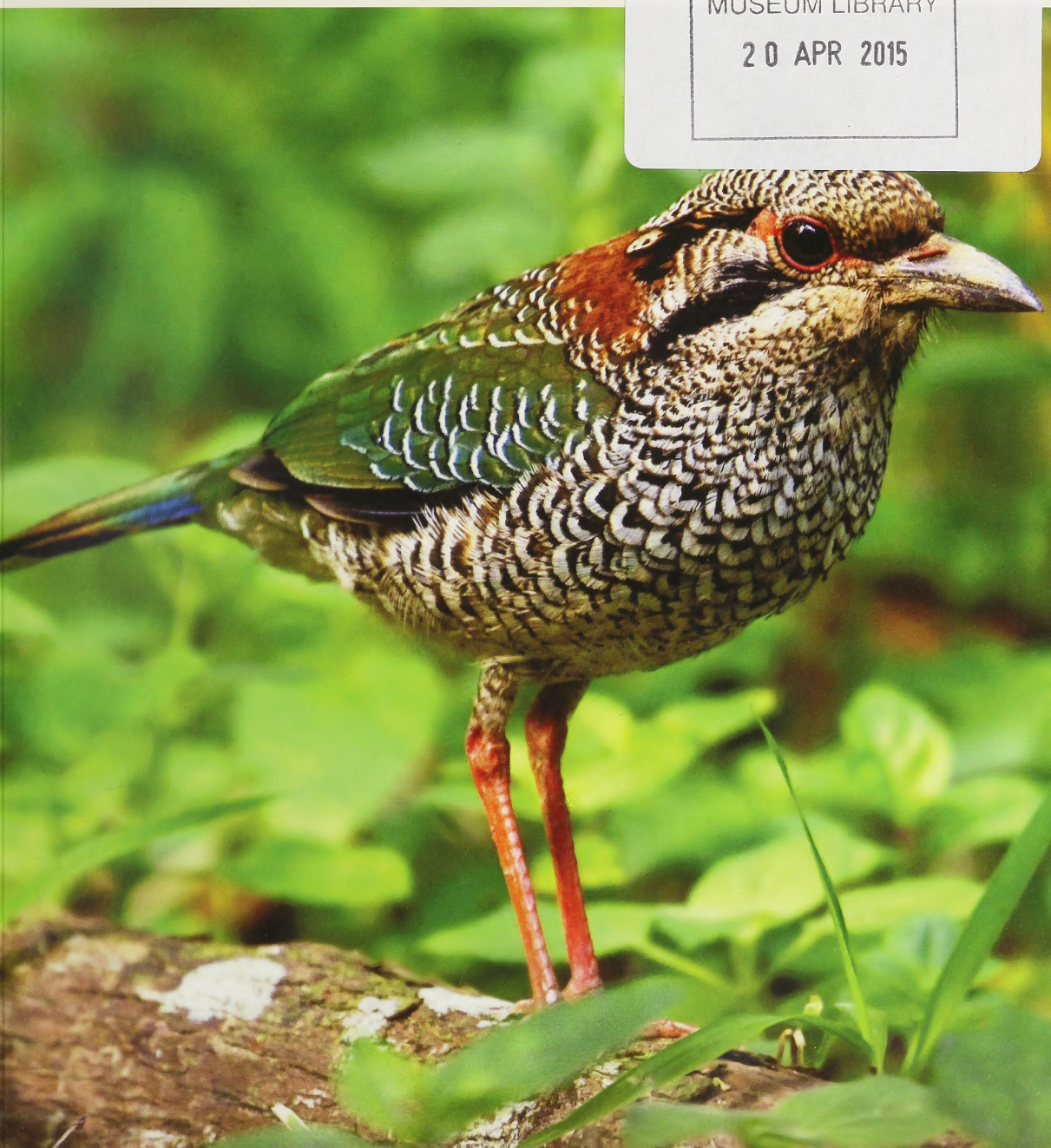


Bulletin of the African Bird Club

Vol 22 No 1 March 2015

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# African Bird Club

Working for birds and conservation in Africa

## The African Bird Club—working for birds and conservation in Africa

We are the charity dedicated to the conservation of birds across Africa. We work with people in Africa providing support for the study of birds and conservation with the aim of improving the status of both migratory and resident species.

We work with individuals and local groups throughout Africa supporting and promoting:

- Conservation projects with a focus on researching, monitoring and protecting African birds
- Conservation education
- Surveys and assessments of lesser-known regions
- The effective communication of information about African birds

Registered Charity No 1053920

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Individual	Europe & Africa: UK£21	Rest of the World: UK£23
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Supporting	UK£35 minimum	
Life	UK£500	

To join or for further details please visit the ABC website (where there are secure online payment facilities) or write to the Membership Secretary—see contact information below.

## ABC Website

<http://www.africanbirdclub.org>

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ABC is always looking for drawings and photos to publish in the Bulletin. If you are interested in contributing, please contact the Graphics Editor, Lionel Sineux, [lionel.sineux@gmail.com](mailto:lionel.sineux@gmail.com)

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## The Bulletin of the African Bird Club

The Bulletin of the ABC provides a forum for news, letters, notices, recent publications, expedition results, reviews and publication of studies on African birds by contributors from throughout the world. Publication of results in the Bulletin of the ABC does not preclude publication of final results as journal papers either by the ABC or elsewhere. No material

should, however, be submitted simultaneously to the Bulletin of the ABC and to any other publication.

Brief notes for contributors appear elsewhere in this Bulletin and further details are available from the Editor ([editor@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:editor@africanbirdclub.org)).



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Scaly Ground Roller *Geobiastes squamiger* (Dubi Shapiro)

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Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus* (Simon Fletcher)

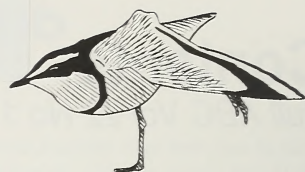
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# Club News

## A farewell from the outgoing Chairman

This Bulletin will be reaching you just ahead of our AGM in April—and that meeting will be my last as Chairman. From the AGM Agenda, you will note that Richard Charles has been nominated as my successor. He has proved an excellent Vice Chairman, is just the right person to take the Club forward, and I hope you will give him all of your support.

During my seven years in the Chair, I have been helped by many people and without their assistance the role would have been impossible. Firstly, I thank the generous people who have donated money to our Conservation Fund. Many have chosen to sponsor individual projects, and through their kindness we have been able to increase our support of projects to a far greater level than we had ever imagined. But, there is no point in having money if you don't have people to make the best use of it. I am grateful to the many Council Members and other volunteers who have made sure that ABC is run efficiently and uses its resources effectively. We have a great Conservation Committee that assesses almost 100 grant applications every year, and a terrific editorial team who ensure that our Bulletin is respected by scientists and birders alike. So, I really want to thank the ABC team for all that we have achieved together.

But finally I want to thank you, the members. The Club relies heavily on your support too. If there were no members, there would be no Club—and without the Club none of this would be happening at all. Every year we have to recruit about 150 new members in order just to stand still, and each of you can help with that. If you have a birding friend who loves Africa, then do please persuade

them to join us, or simply buy them membership as a gift!

Although I am standing down from the Chair and will be doing other things, I will not be disappearing. I converted to Life Membership a few years ago, so I plan to make sure I get my money's worth! But whatever else I am doing, I will always be looking out for ABC, wishing it well and wanting it to succeed.

Thank you for your support over the last seven years. We've achieved a lot together.

Keith Betton

## ABC Members Day and AGM: Saturday 11 April 2015

On Saturday 11 April 2015 we will hold our 21st Annual Meeting and AGM, in the prestigious Flett Theatre at the Natural History Museum in London. We hope that as many people as possible will join us for this event. We have a great line-up of speakers covering subjects including the Albertine Rift, Cape Verde Warbler *Acrocephalus brevippennis*, Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher *Terpsiphone corvina*, BirdLife's Flyways Programme, and the incredible advances in satellite-tracking of our migrant birds. There will also be a wide range of books from WildSounds on sale, together with ABC's own goods. We hope that many of you will be able to join us. Full details are on the ABC website: [www.africanbirdclub.org](http://www.africanbirdclub.org)

## ABC Trustee changes

At the 2015 AGM, we will be sorry to see several Trustees stand down. Carolyn Hall joined the team for a year to help us with our membership administration and Stephen Pringle became our Treasurer in 2013, but due to his return to academic studies has been forced to stand down. We thank them both for their work.

Five new Trustees have been nominated for election at the AGM this year. Two of these were co-opted during 2014. Chris Spooner was brought in to assume the role of Treasurer and Chris Abrams became our webmaster. We are delighted that three other ABC members have also agreed to be nominated as future Trustees. Rodah Owako, from Kenya, is currently studying for a M.Sc. in Conservation Leadership at Cambridge University in the UK; Steve Lowe is a widely travelled birder with a particular interest in taxonomy; and Phil Hall brings a huge wealth of experience to the Club from his many years in Nigeria. Members will be invited to vote on their appointment at the AGM.

We are always interested to hear from members who feel they may have time to assist with ABC's many activities. Please do e-mail: [chairman@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:chairman@africanbirdclub.org)

## ABC spends UK£25,000 to help protect Taita Apalis

ABC has made its largest-ever financial commitment to conservation by contributing UK£25,000 towards the cost of leasing a forest fragment in the Taita Hills—crucial for the long-term survival of the Critically Endangered Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis* (Fig. 1).

The Msidunyi fragment was first discovered by Luca Borghesio during an ABC-sponsored survey in 2011 (see pp. 26–35). The land is under pressure from deforestation, and while outright purchase of the forest is impossible at present, a 25-year lease has been negotiated. This will form the nucleus of a wider landscape restoration project, which aims to restore native forest habitat, equating to an increase of 25% in native forest cover within the Taita Hills.





**Figure 1.** The Critically Endangered Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis* (Adrian Binns)  
L'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscicularis*, espèce classée comme « Gravement menacée d'extinction » (Adrian Binns)

The work is being led by *NatureKenya* and protection will reduce the extinction risk to c.6% of the global population of Taita Apalis, which has a tiny range. In addition, other globally threatened and endemic species at the site will also gain protection.

Research has identified three corridors essential for restoring and maintaining the core ecological connectivity of the Taita landscape, and this wood, although relatively small at 7.5 ha, is at the centre of one of these ecological corridors, as well as being a beautiful example of what was once the original forest cover in the Taita Hills. Taita Apalis is a forest-edge bird, so while it does not actually occur within the forest itself, protection of the entire habitat is essential for its future.

ABC is delighted to be working with *NatureKenya* to protect this land, and is pleased to be cooperating with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife in the UK) and World Land Trust to ensure that the lease is financed.

### ABC conservation spend reaches UK£200,000

In its 20th year of operation, the African Bird Club has passed another milestone, having now spent more than UK£200,000 on 202 bird conservation projects in over 30 countries. The Club funded 18 projects in 2014 at a cost of £32,645. Full details of recent awards appear elsewhere in this Bulletin (pp. 6–13). This is in addition to the £25,000 dedicated to the Taita Apalis.

The Club aims to encourage as wide a range of ideas as possible, and many different types of project can be considered provided there is a clear conservation objective. Supported projects include surveys and research into African birds, educational projects or training courses, production of guides to the birds of a country in local languages, and interpretative material for nature reserves.

Conservation Awards are valued up to UK£2,000 and are typically granted to African nationals working in their own country. In addition, Expedition Awards are open to all applicants and are intended for those needing to travel across Africa; these

are capped at UK£3,000. The Club considers applications three times per annum, with a panel of experts being consulted.

### ABC Conservation Tour of Tanzania & Kenya: 12–28 May 2015

It's an overused description, but this really could be the 'trip of a lifetime'! The Club is grateful to Adam Riley and the team at Rockjumper for putting together a truly magnificent tour of Tanzania and Kenya, for which a portion of the proceeds will go directly to ABC's Conservation Fund, to support research on African birds and their habitats. The itinerary for the trip, and the possibilities to see 'a plethora of African birds' and some of the world's greatest wildlife spectacles, including the great wildebeest *Connochaetes* migration, are utterly mouth-watering. The dates of the trip are 12–28 May 2015, so see the Rockjumper advert in this Bulletin (p. 124), and contact Rockjumper as soon as possible to see if places are still available. E-mail: [info@rockjumperbirding.com](mailto:info@rockjumperbirding.com)

### Ring African birds and help ABC

Much of what we know about bird migration routes, population changes and survival comes from ringing studies, and ABC is working with Malcolm Wilson to provide outstanding opportunities to ring birds in several African localities. Malcolm is offering trips that incorporate teaching and practicing ringing and survey methods, as well as conventional birding. He is, of course, well known to many ABC members, and is an expert bird ringer and trainer. He will be creating trips open to the interested novice to the experienced ringer. To our knowledge, he is the only tour operator offering such an opportunity. Each trip will be designated as an ABC Conservation Tour, with a proportion of the income being donated to our Conservation Fund.

In 2013 Malcolm was appointed by the Jane Goodall Institute to survey the avifauna of their



Tchimpounga Reserve in the Republic of Congo, for reasons of scientific enquiry, to train field staff, rangers and students, and to develop future tourism to the region. Seven visits have been made to date. Apart from extensive mist-netting and ringing, the team has undertaken timed species counts. Already, several new records for the area have emerged and will be published in a future issue of the Bulletin, as well as the results of work with Dr Stuart Sharp, who was the recipient of an ABC Conservation Award for the initial survey. Participants on forthcoming tours will be able to take part in all of these activities.

Malcolm has long been one of the few, high-volume, raptor ringers in South Africa. By ringing raptors, we will be able to discover much-needed information about their movements, which should aid future conservation initiatives. If you are interested in ringing raptors, then joining one of our trips to Limpopo Province, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Free State will provide the perfect opportunity to see these amazing birds up close. For details of trips in 2015 and beyond, please contact Malcolm Wilson, e-mail: shoebill1961@gmail.com

### Membership matters

Firstly, we welcome back Alan Williams, who has temporarily assumed the role of Membership Administrator. In particular, please let him have details of your e-mail address, if it has changed, or if you do not think we are aware of it. E-mail: membership@africanbirdclub.org

### Help ABC to reclaim tax with Gift Aid

Quite simply, Gift Aid means that for every UK£1 given to us by a UK taxpayer—whether in the form of membership subscriptions or donations—we can claim a further 25% from UK Revenue & Customs. Already a significant number of our UK members have permitted us to do this, which costs them nothing more than a signature on a simple form declaring that UK tax has been paid and authorising ABC to



**Figure 2.** African Bird Club stand at the British Birdwatching Fair, Rutland Water, UK, August 2014 (Richard Charles)

Le stand du Club au Birdfair de Rutland, Royaume-Uni, août 2014 (Richard Charles)



**Figure 3.** Shiiwua Manu receiving the Marsh Award for International Ornithology from HRH, The Duke of Edinburgh (British Trust for Ornithology)

Shiiwua Manu reçoit le « Marsh Award for International Ornithology » des mains de Son Altesse Royale le duc d'Édimbourg (British Trust for Ornithology)

claim it back. However, there are still many UK members who have not signed a Gift Aid form. To sign up, please e-mail our Membership Administrator, Alan Williams: membership@africanbirdclub.org

### British Birdwatching Fair

Once again, the Club attended the annual British Birdwatching Fair at Rutland Water, in August 2014. We were pleased to meet almost 100 ABC members there and to unveil our new stand design (Fig. 2), which has a strong African theme and can be packed away in



**Figure 4.** Tiwonge Gawa receiving the International Young Conservationist Award (BirdLife International)

Tiwonge Gawa reçoit le « International Young Conservationist Award » (BirdLife International)

minutes. Our thanks go to Callan Cohen of Birding Africa who bravely represented the Club in the annual 'Bird Brain of Britain' contest, winning UK£250 for the Club in the process. In particular, we thank those members who gave up their valuable time to assist on the stand. If you can help at this year's event (Friday to Sunday 21–23 August) please contact Phil Hyde, e-mail: secretary@africanbirdclub.org



### Shiiwua Manu receives Marsh Award for International Ornithology

ABC is delighted that one of its Nigerian members, Dr Shiiwua Manu, has been awarded the Marsh Award for International Ornithology for his exceptional work in avian research. Dr Manu heads the A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute (APLORI), the Biological Conservatory of the University of Jos, Nigeria. The award was presented by HRH, The Duke of Edinburgh, at a ceremony hosted by the British Trust for Ornithology (Fig. 3).

### Tiwonge Gawa receives International Young Conservationist Award

The International Young Conservationist Award has been given to Tiwonge Gawa, who is

ABC's Malawi representative (Fig. 4). A Ph.D. student at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal and a volunteer for the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi, she has been key in assessing threatened species and Important Bird Areas in Malawi and also coordinates a garden bird count. The award is a joint initiative of the International Ranger Federation and IUCN/WCPA.

### Seeking past and present records of Lilian's Lovebirds

Tiwonge Gawa is managing a project to quantify the habitat associations of the Near Threatened Lilian's Lovebird *Agapornis lilianae*. Please send any records you have with dates and locations (and GPS references if possible) from Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Malawi and Tanzania. E-mail: [ngewoti@gmail.com](mailto:ngewoti@gmail.com)

## Request

### Kentish Plover biology research on Lanzarote, Canary Islands

The population of Kentish Plovers *Charadrius alexandrinus* in the Canary Islands has declined significantly in recent years, and the species is now close to extinction on Tenerife and Gran Canaria. On Lanzarote, a study launched in 2012 aims to better understand the species' ecology, especially breeding biology, in order to identify conservation issues that may better inform its protection. Researchers have been colour-ringing the birds, so if you observe a marked Kentish Plover anywhere in the archipelago, please e-mail Gustavo Tejera: [debajodelrisco@hotmail.com](mailto:debajodelrisco@hotmail.com). For more information see GOHNIC.org.

## Advertise in the Bulletin of the ABC

Reach over 1,200 subscribers in more than 60 countries.

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All advertisements must be prepaid: cheques made payable to the African Bird Club or payment made via the ABC website [www.africanbirdclub.org](http://www.africanbirdclub.org).

### Copy deadlines

March Bulletin 15 January  
August Bulletin 15 June



### Rates and technical details

are available on the ABC website at:  
[www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/club/advertise.html)





## New Awards—November 2014

The Conservation Committee reviewed 18 proposals ahead of the November 2014 Council meeting and recommended six for funding. Following the meeting on 1 November 2014, ABC Council agreed to fund all six projects totalling UK£10,798, for which ABC found UK£5,475 from sponsors. Brief details of the successful proposals are presented below.

### Survey of Sharpe's Longclaw and Aberdare Cisticola in Kenya

Sharpe's Longclaw *Macronyx sharpei* and Aberdare Cisticola *Cisticola aberdare*, both listed as Endangered, occur sympatrically in Mau Narok-Molo grasslands. Wismer Cheronu Bore of the Dept. of Natural Resources, Egerton University, received a Conservation Award of UK£1,219, of which UK£500 was kindly sponsored by Paul Bristow, to map the extent of land-cover changes to the grasslands using remote sensing, and to estimate population sizes of the two species. Comparing the abundance and distribution of *M. sharpei* and *C. aberdare* in the relatively intact habitats of Mau Narok-Molo grasslands with that in areas such as the Kinangop Plateau, which suffer high levels of habitat fragmentation, will yield information to inform land-use planning, decision-making and community-led conservation initiatives.

### Increasing understanding of Uluguru Bushshrike in Tanzania

The Uluguru Bushshrike *Malaconotus alius* is a Critically Endangered species found only in the Uluguru Mountains in central Tanzania. In 2000, a census estimated a population of 1,200 pairs, while repeat surveys in 2007 found that the population had not changed significantly. However, the species' distribution is extremely small. Its stronghold is in Uluguru North, with only a few pairs surviving in Uluguru South, and the two forests are separated by a 1.5-km gap that limits movement of birds between them. In 2009, these forests were jointly designated as Uluguru Nature Reserve; however, forest degradation is ongoing. Chacha Werema of the University of Dar es Salaam received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000 to undertake a survey to provide an up-to-date population estimate for Uluguru Bushshrike and identify key conservation recommendations to address forest habitat degradation. Two sponsors generously supported this award: Paul Lascelles provided UK£1,000, while Paul Bristow contributed UK£500.

### Anambra Waxbill in Nigeria

Anambra Waxbill *Estrilda poliopareia*, listed as Vulnerable, was thought to be restricted to a few localities in southern Nigeria, until several were



Sharpe's Longclaw / Sentinelle de Sharpe *Macronyx sharpei*  
(Nik Borrow)



Anambra Waxbill / Astrild du Niger *Estrilda poliopareia*  
(Bruno Portier)

photographed in Benin in 2010. It reportedly has a small population; this, coupled with lack of conservation action, because of paucity of data, places the species in a precarious situation. Ebenezer Olubunmi Coker of APLORI received a Conservation Award of UK£1,775, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to investigate the abundance, density and genetic association between populations of Anambra Waxbill within its historical strongholds in Bayelsa state, Nigeria. Line transects will be used to determine the species' abundance and density, which will be related to estimates of habitat quality and food resources. Potential threats and factors limiting the survival of the species will be highlighted. In addition, molecular analysis of blood samples will be used to determine the level of relatedness among populations studied. The results will be used to develop a conservation plan and advocacy.





## Maccoa Duck survey in Kenya's Rift Valley and central wetlands

Wetland ecosystems in Kenya face major threats due to conversion of wetlands for agriculture and other human activities. As a result, many waterfowl are rapidly declining. The threat category of Maccoa Duck *Oxyura maccoa* changed from Least Concern, in 2004, to Near Threatened, in 2007, and BirdLife International considers that its small population size and ongoing declines due to a variety of threats may qualify it for Vulnerable status. In 1994, a total of 175 Maccoa Ducks was counted at Lake Naivasha and Lake Oloidien, whereas recent waterfowl censuses recorded few or none. Gladys Kung'u of the Ornithology Section, National Museums of Kenya, was granted a Conservation Award of UK£1,804 to census the Maccoa Duck population throughout its former range in the Rift Valley and central Kenya. The project will also assess the threats facing the species and create awareness among local people living around the wetlands it inhabits. Via a publicity and awareness campaign, the project will encourage submission of observations to the recently established Kenya Bird Atlas Project.

## Population status and distribution of Mount Cameroon Francolin

The Endangered Mount Cameroon Francolin *Pternistis camerunensis* is endemic to forest at 850–2,100 m on the slopes of the mountain. Marcel Ashute Essebe of the Cameroon Center for Agri-Environmental Research (CAMCAER) and University of Dschang, Cameroon, received a Conservation Award of UK£2,000 to determine the species' current population and distribution, and compare its abundance along an altitudinal gradient, at different sites, habitats and seasons. Detailed habitat characteristics will be measured and local attitudes to the francolin will be assessed using informal questionnaire-based interviews. Community awareness of the importance of the species will be raised and local people will be trained in monitoring techniques.

## Conservation status of Olive Ibis in Cross River state, Nigeria

Olive Ibis *Bostrychia olivacea* inhabits lowland forests from Sierra Leone to Tanzania. Despite its wide range and classification as Least Concern, the species is relatively poorly known. Tasso Leventis generously provided UK£1,700 towards a total Conservation Award of UK£2,000 made to Mbeson Emmanuel Bessong of the Boki Birds Foundation, to survey the species at various localities in Cross River State, Nigeria. The species has only recently been reported from these areas, so the survey will aim to establish its

current status and ascertain whether it can be used as an indicator of forest health. Local villagers will be trained as survey assistants.

## Reports received

### Tana River Delta survey

The Tana River Delta is the name loosely given to the floodplain ecosystem of the lower Tana River, a vast wetland complex covering c.130,000 ha on the Kenyan coast. The delta is roughly triangular in shape, with its apex on the Belisa River (north of Garsen) and its base a 50-km stretch of beach along Ungwana Bay, stretching from Kipini in the north-east to Mto Kilifi in the south-west. The Tana Delta harbours populations of the Near Threatened and restricted-range Malindi Pipit *Anthus melindae* and, in winter, the Endangered Basra Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus griseldis*. The wetlands, including the coast and offshore islets, periodically support exceptional concentrations of waterbirds, of which internationally important populations have been recorded for no fewer than 22 species, and the delta also hosts one of the very few breeding sites for colonial waterbirds in Kenya. Together, these attributes qualify it as one of the most important of Kenya's 60 Important Bird Areas (IBAs). Over 100,000 inhabitants from the Pokomo, Orma, Somali, Wardei and Wata communities rely on the delta for subsistence, including agriculture, fishing and pastoralism, as the grasslands are an important dry-season grazing resource. However, the area is threatened by several large agricultural projects, including sugarcane / biofuel plantations.

In October 2011, Joseph Mwangi received a Conservation Award of UK£1,522, generously



Malindi Pipit / Pipit de Malindi *Anthus melindae*  
(Nik Borrow)





sponsored by Tasso Leventis, to document current land use in the delta and monitor the rate of conversion over a 30-year period, using remote sensing techniques and historical data, coupled with questionnaires directed at local people. Landsat™ images were used to undertake visual analysis of land-use systems between 1980 and 2012. A significant shift from traditional land uses was observed, with most land being converted to agriculture during this period, with implications for biodiversity, especially migrant waterfowl. Questionnaire interviews with 85 residents revealed that most people (56%) rely on the delta as farmers, with only 20.7% in formal employment, 8.5% in business, and 14.6% were unemployed. The majority (62.9%) believed that communities owned the delta, while 28.4% considered that it belonged to the government and 8.8% thought it was free access. Twenty-five percent of those interviewed said they owned land in the delta used mostly for farming (75.4%), followed by pisciculture (10.1%), livestock-rearing (8.7%) and other uses (5.8%). Most landowners indicated that they were highly likely to change land usage in future, to increase productivity, by adopting new technology and modern farming methods. Conflicts attributed to land use within the delta were reportedly high. Conflicts between farmers and pastoralists were the most common (55%), with human–wildlife conflict (20%), internal conflicts (8%) and community conflict with government (5%) also reported. The main threats to the delta are anthropogenic, together amounting to 61% of threats. Population increase (19%) is ranked as the major threat and is also presumed to be the key driver of the other main threats: over-exploitation of resources (15%), cutting of mangroves and other trees (15%), and soil erosion (6%). Other threats are climate-related in the form of drying-out of some areas, changing of the river course and unpredictable rainfall affecting seasonal cycles (together totalling 15%). To mitigate the depletion of the Tana Delta and other vulnerable resources in Kenya, the government should implement relevant policies, resolve social strife and enforce legal instruments.

## Liberian Greenbul: still a riddle

In September 2012 Ben Phalan of the University of Cambridge received a UK£1,980 Expedition Award, generously sponsored by Tasso Leventis, for his project 'On the trail of a West African enigma—a quest for the Liberian Greenbul'. *Phyllastrephus leucolepis* is listed as Critically Endangered, and has not been recorded since it was first found by Wulf Gatter in the early 1980s, at Cavalla Forest, near Zwedru in Grand Gedeh county, Liberia. It was described as a species distinct from Icterine Greenbul *P. icterinus* on the basis of differences in plumage (whitish spots on wings), behaviour (wing-trembling as opposed to wing-flicking)

and microhabitat (foraging on larger branches close to the trunk of trees, rather than narrower branches and foliage). A previous expedition in 2010 by Flomo Molubah and Michael Garbo from the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) did not locate the species, but did succeed in finding the precise area where Gatter worked and identified local people who had been his field assistants. This information provided an invaluable starting point for the latest expedition, which was in the field from 7 February to 8 March 2013. In addition to Ben, the observers were Lincoln Fishpool (BirdLife International), Emmanuel Loqueh (SCNL) and Trokon Grimes (Liberian Forest Development Authority). The principal survey method employed were transects, following hunting trails, stopping to observe mixed-species flocks when they were encountered. Playback of Icterine Greenbul was also used, but only attracted that species. Playback of Shining Drongo *Dicrurus atripennis* was used in an unsuccessful attempt to attract mixed bird flocks that might include Liberian Greenbuls, and playback of Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum* was used to elicit mobbing, but only attracted Green Hylia *Hylia prasina*. Time was also spent observing birds at ant swarms, and pools used by forest birds for drinking and bathing, and mist-netting.

No Liberian Greenbuls were seen, but the expedition did observe 11 species of global conservation concern, including five Vulnerable species: White-breasted Guineafowl *Agelastes meleagrides*, Timneh Parrot *Psittacus timneh*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus*, Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata* and Yellow-bearded Greenbul, as well as five Near Threatened species: Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Green-tailed Bristlebill *Bleda eximius*, Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens*, Copper-tailed Starling *Lamprolornis cupreocauda* and Red-fronted Antpecker *Parmoptila rubrifrons*, and one Data Deficient species: Yellow-footed Honeyguide *Melignomon eisentrauti*. Twenty-three Icterine Greenbuls were mist-netted, 17 of which were blood-sampled for DNA analysis and comparison with DNA from the type specimen.

Although the expedition could not confirm the presence of Liberian Greenbul in Cavalla Forest, this cannot be taken as definitive evidence of its absence. Large areas of forest remain, forest birds can be difficult to detect, and other species probably occur that were not located during the expedition. Other than Liberian Greenbul, the most notable 'miss' was Gola Malimbe *Malimbus ballmanni*, which was reported to be 'locally common' in the 1980s in this part of south-east Liberia. Cavalla Forest nevertheless merits conservation for its other biodiversity: 11 bird species, and according to local reports, at least nine mammal species and one reptile, all of global conservation concern. There are





Crowned Eagle / Aigle couronné *Stephanoaetus coronatus*  
(Nik Borrow)

extensive areas of forest, including closed-canopy large trees. Large hornbills were abundant, despite evidence of hunting pressure there was a good population of White-breasted Guineafowl and at least 2–4 territories of Crowned Eagle. Cavalla Forest thus continues to meet Important Bird Area criteria and qualifies for national conservation priority, even if Liberian Greenbul is absent. Whether it will continue to support its current levels of biodiversity, however, will depend on whether threats from logging, hunting, charcoal burning and forest clearance can be controlled.



Red-fronted Antpecker / Parmoptile à front rouge  
*Parmoptila rufifrons* (Adam Riley)

### Kitobo Forest survey, Kenya

The little known Kitobo (or Kitovu) Forest is in south-east Kenya just north of Tanzania's North Pare Mountains and south of Kenya's Taita Hills. It is located within the biodiversity-rich Eastern Arc Forests and covers 160 ha at an altitude of 725 m. Edson Mlamba and nine colleagues from the Ornithology Section, National Museums of Kenya, conducted an avifaunal survey on 8–17 November 2012, using timed species counts, point counts, mist-netting and *ad hoc* observations. Their September 2012 Expedition Award of UK£1,971 was kindly sponsored by Olle Holst of Avifauna. A total of 159 bird species was recorded, an impressive total for a tiny forest, but extrapolation of the species accumulation curve indicated that 180 bird species are potentially present. Only six are forest specialists, 22 are forest generalists and a further 20 forest visitors. Four globally threatened species were recorded in the forest or in surrounding areas: White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus* (Endangered), White-headed Vulture *Trigoniceps occipitalis*, Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* and Southern Ground Hornbill *Bucorvus leadbeateri* (all Vulnerable). A total of 15 Afrotropical migrants and 11 Palearctic migrants were recorded in and around the forest. Based on the presence of the four globally threatened species, the forest and its environs potentially qualify as an Important Bird Area. Illegal logging of large trees, grazing and flooding were identified as the major threats. Flooding occurs from the numerous underground springs, including Njoro Springs, which are thought to originate on Mt Kilimanjaro. Local communities consider that the frequency of flooding



White-backed Vulture / Vautour africain *Gyps africanus*  
(Robert van Zalinge)





White-headed Vulture / Vautour à tête blanche *Trigonoceps occipitalis* (Robert van Zalinge)



Martial Eagle / Aigle martial *Polemaetus bellicosus* (Jacques de Spéville)

has increased in recent years causing the death of many trees, perhaps as a result of global warming that has increased snow melt on Mt Kilimanjaro.

### Cape Verde Warbler study

In February 2013 Dr David Richardson of the University of East Anglia, Norwich, received UK£1,500, generously sponsored by the Puffback Fund, for a study of the conservation, ecology and



Southern Ground Hornbill / Bucorve du Sud *Bucorvus leadbeateri* (Adam Riley)

genetics of Cape Verde Warbler *Acrocephalus brevipennis* (Endangered). Field work was undertaken between November 2013 and January 2014 by Helena Batalha, one of Richardson's Ph.D. students, in collaboration with staff from the National Institute for Agrarian Research and Development and the Natural Parks of Serra Malagueta, Fogo and Monte Gordo. Helena also collaborated with the NGO Biosfera I, using the ABC grant to hire Jaelsa Moreira, a Cape Verdean biologist, as a field assistant during the project. All Cape Verdean participants were trained in mist-netting, bird ringing and data collection techniques—a significant boost to conservation capacity in the archipelago. Warblers were mist-netted using playback of male song as a lure. In total, the team captured, ringed and collected blood samples and biometric data from 95 Cape Verde Warblers on the three islands known to harbour the species: 50 on Santiago, 30 on Fogo and 15 on São Nicolau. The species was not located on Brava. Habitat details and songs of males were also recorded. Colour ringing revealed that birds used larger areas than previously thought, suggesting that earlier studies may have over-estimated the species' numbers by double-counting. The methods used in this project will be incorporated into the national bird ringing scheme being developed jointly by Biosfera I and the General Direction for the Environment. The data collected will be analysed to assess the degree of difference between populations, and to inform future conservation efforts. A follow-up expedition by Helena Batalha planned for October–December 2014 has also been funded by ABC (*Bull. ABC* 21: 129).

### Mbooni Hills survey

In February 2013, Rogers Makau of the Ornithology Section, National Museums of Kenya, received a Conservation Award of UK£1,490 for an avifaunal survey of the Mbooni Hills, located in Makeni county,





eastern Kenya. The award was kindly sponsored by Paul Lascelles (UK£1,090) and Paul Bristow (UK£400). The Mbooni Hills are inselbergs that rise to c.1,200 m from the arid scrubland of the surrounding plains at around 400 m. The summits are characterised by semi-evergreen dry upland forests. Despite the fact that some are gazetted as Forest Reserves, knowledge of their biodiversity is scanty and conservation efforts are minimal or entirely lacking. The objectives of the study, undertaken in May 2013, were to determine avifaunal diversity, document the different habitats and investigate threats. Avifaunal data were collected over 15 days using timed species counts, point counts, mist-netting and *ad hoc* observations. Sampling effort was concentrated in four hilltop forests: Katende, Mulooni, Mavindu and Kivale. A total of 65 species was observed, including two forest specialists, 14 forest generalists, 28 forest visitors and 21 non-forest species. Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* (Vulnerable) was recorded at Katende. The forests are threatened by various anthropogenic activities including illegal logging, fires, charcoal burning, grazing, tree debarking and human encroachment. Local community participation in conservation via the establishment of Community Forest Associations is needed to preserve the numerous ecosystem benefits that these forests provide.

## Busia Grasslands Blue Swallow survey

Blue Swallow *Hirundo atrocaerulea* (Vulnerable) is an intra-African migrant with a total range spanning ten countries. It is listed as Endangered on the East African Regional Red Data List. In western Kenya, Blue Swallows winter in the moist grasslands of Ruma National Park and Busia Grasslands Important Bird Areas. The species is threatened by habitat degradation and loss, local hunting and its specialised requirements. In June 2013 Maurice Ogoma received a UK£1,500 Conservation Award, UK£500 of which was kindly provided by Paul Bristow and UK£1,000 by Mark Constantine's Lush Fund. Field observations in the Busia Grasslands were made in July–September 2013 by Maurice and Martin Odino, aided by two local field assistants. No Blue Swallows were seen, although in 2007 at a similar time of year Kariuki Ndag'ang'a recorded 21 birds and a two-day survey of Ruma National Park by Maurice Ogoma in 2012 recorded 87 individuals (*Bull. ABC* 20: 137). Maurice suggested that the species' absence during the recent survey could be due to increased anthropogenic activities, especially the conversion of formerly extensive moist grasslands into sugarcane plantations. Coupled with this, other areas had been planted with maize, and those patches not cultivated were dry and overgrazed. In partnership with Ecofinder Kenya, an outdoor theatre / puppetry performance was given to an audience of c.1,000 people at Nambale market in Busia. The drama conveyed



Blue Swallow / Hirondelle bleue *Hirundo atrocaerulea*  
(John Caddick)

messages about the need to conserve Blue Swallow habitat. A community meeting was also facilitated via Nature Busia, a community-based organisation, during which the need clearly emerged to provide sustainable livelihoods for local people as compensation for conservation of local grasslands, because the latter (which they legally own) are currently their only source of income.

## Volunteers for bird conservation

In June 2013 Oluwabunmi Jegede of the Nigerian Conservation Foundation (NCF) received a Conservation Award of UK£1,337 to operate a training workshop on citizen science and bird conservation in Ibadan, Nigeria, in an attempt to replicate the success of the Lekki Bird Club in Lagos. The three-day workshop was held at the University of Ibadan and International Institute for Tropical Agriculture on 5–7 March, 2014 and was attended by a total of 40 people including facilitators from NCF, staff of the department of Wildlife and Ecotourism, University of Ibadan (UI), and the Forest Project, International Institute for Tropical Agriculture (IITA). Day one consisted of lectures covering understanding birds and bird identification, and was followed by two days of field activities held at Awba Dam and IITA Golf Course. This workshop, which was kindly sponsored by Olle Holst of Avifauna, was a key step in the inauguration of Ibadan Bird Club (IBC). The IBC aims to encourage the effective collection of bird data. Like its Lagos predecessor, IBC will be a platform to monitor bird populations and their habitats via periodic expeditions to key sites within the Ibadan area.

## Karima Forest survey

In June 2013 Edwin Gichohi Njuguna of the Ornithology Section, National Museums of Kenya, received a Conservation Award of UK£1,048 kindly sponsored by Paul Lascelles, for an avifaunal survey of Karima Forest, a dome-shaped volcanic hill near Nyeri,





Kenya, covering an area of c.107 ha and reaching a highest point of 2,014 m. The forest is of interest as it may be a refuge or stopover for birds moving between Mount Kenya and Aberdares National Parks. The project aimed to assess the bird species present and determine the conservation importance of the forest, and took place in October 2013. Point counts, timed species counts, mist-netting and opportunistic observations were used. A total of 109 species was recorded, among them five Afrotropical migrants and eight Palearctic migrants. In addition, 21 Afrotropical highland biome species and one Somali-Maasai biome species were observed. Of the 109 species, 38% were forest visitors, 25% forest generalists and 10% forest specialists. It was estimated that 50% of the forest now consists of exotic trees. The main threats are logging, poaching, invasive species and replacement of indigenous trees with plantations of exotics, mainly *Eucalyptus* spp. Other threats identified include agricultural encroachment and infrastructure development.

## Conservation education in the Taita Hills

In October 2013 Lawrence Wagura of the National Museums of Kenya received a Conservation Award of UK£1,347, generously provided by the Lush Fund, to implement environmental education for schools via guided nature walks. The Taita Hills in south-east Kenya are c.150 km from the coast and are surrounded by semi-arid plains at an altitude of c.900 m. The three main massifs, Sagalla, Mbololo and Dabida, achieve a max. altitude of 2,228 m and were once entirely covered in forest. The hills have been isolated for a long time and exhibit a high degree of endemism in plant, invertebrate and vertebrate taxa. However, forest cover is now heavily fragmented and many species are severely threatened, including the Critically Endangered Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis*. Between 4 and 22 November 2013, students from ten local schools within walking distance of the selected fragments joined environmental education sessions in groups of 60–80 students. A total of 724 students participated, from four local primary schools, five secondary schools and one college. Following a two-hour introductory talk they were guided on a 2.5-hour nature walk. They were taught the names of common plants and animals encountered, along with facts about adaptations and inter-dependence. Students were asked to take notes and make sketches, which encouraged them to undertake independent field investigation, reinforced their scientific curiosity, and built confidence in the value of their own observations. They were also taught how to use binoculars and telescopes. In the long term, the conservation of remnant patches of forest in the Taita Hills will depend on an appreciation of their value by local people. Lawrence (e-mail: wagulauw@gmail.com) has also authored a beautiful 80-page (70 MB) publication *A*

*Guide to the Taita Hills Unique Natural History*, which he will provide on request.

## Dzombo Hills, Kenya

In October 2013 Esther Wangui of the Ornithology Section, National Museums of Kenya, received an Expedition Award of UK£1,996, generously provided by the Lush Fund, for a survey of the Dzombo Hills. This coastal Forest Reserve gazetted in 1941, is near Shimba Hills National Park. It covers 295 ha of an igneous intrusion from the surrounding coastal plain, over an altitudinal range of 100–470 m. Part of it is regarded as sacred forest because it contains the grave of a Digo ruler, designated a National Monument in 1991. No avifaunal surveys had been undertaken for at least 15 years. The ten-day survey in December 2013, carried out by a team of nine ornithologists, utilised mist-netting, point counts, timed species counts and *ad hoc* observations. A total of 118 bird species was recorded, including ten forest specialists, 25 forest generalists and 31 forest visitors. Four species of conservation concern—Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus* (Vulnerable), Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri* and Plain-backed Sunbird *Anthreptes reichenowi* (all Near Threatened)—were recorded in the forest or nearby, but the expedition did not encounter Sokoke Pipit *Anthus sokokensis* (Endangered), which had previously been reported from the area. A total of 11 Afrotropical migrants and eight Palearctic migrants were also observed. Threats include logging, encroachment by farmers, snaring of wildlife, cattle grazing and invasive exotics such as *Eucalyptus* spp. and *Lantana camara*. The reserve remains important for the avifauna characteristic of coastal forests and efforts should be made to enlist the support of a local community-based group, Mrima, Marenje and Dzombo Forests Organization, in its conservation.



Sokoke Pipit / Pipit de Sokoke *Anthus sokokensis*  
(Nik Borrow)





## Ecologically enigmatic Ethiopian endemics

In February 2014 Andrew Bladon, a Ph.D. student at the University of Cambridge, received an Expedition Award of UK£2,000 to investigate the effects of climate—especially temperature—on species' ranges. The restricted-range Ethiopian Bushcrow *Zavattariornis stresemanni* (Endangered) and White-tailed Swallow *Hirundo megaensis* (Vulnerable) are both ecologically enigmatic and conservation priorities. Both occupy small ranges in southern Ethiopia, partially within Yabello Wildlife Sanctuary. During a three-month field trip, from April to June 2014, Andrew was assisted by Motuma Adula from the Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History Society, and Jarso Denge and Galgalo Dadacha, both from Yabello National Park. The expedition found 28 White-tailed Swallow and ten Ethiopian Swallow *Hirundo aethiopica* nests in the north-west of White-tailed Swallow's known range. Many were sited inside villagers' huts. Four White-tailed Swallow nests were found outside this area, extending the species' known breeding range. At each nest a GPS point was taken, and various features of the size and position of the nest, along with features of the hut, were recorded. A nearby control hut of similar size and occupation was chosen and the same data recorded. A temperature logger was employed next to each nest, and at a comparable height in the control hut, while a third unit was installed in a nearby tree. For the bushcrow study, using data from 2013, three sites were selected where bushcrow densities were known to be high and temperatures to be low, and three where the opposite applied. Two temperature loggers were placed in trees at each site, recording hourly data. The research forms part of Andrew's Ph.D. project, and analyses and field work will continue for the next two years. The goal is to publish much of the work in scientific journals, including in a more detailed article on the nesting behaviour of White-tailed Swallow and some breeding and behavioural notes on Ethiopian Bushcrow in this

bulletin. The award was kindly sponsored by Caroline Ash as part of a bequest to ABC from John Ash, co-author of *The Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea*.

## Guide and guard training in Senegal

At 913,000 ha, Niokolo-Koba National Park (NKNP) is the largest protected area in Senegal and one of the largest and most important nature sanctuaries in West Africa. The exceptional biodiversity of NKNP was recognised in 1981 with its designation as a Biosphere Reserve and World Heritage Site. Since then the park has been increasingly affected by human activities. In 2007 it was listed as a World Heritage Site in Danger due to the pressures of poaching, the damage to ponds by invasive plants, incursion of livestock and degradation of tourist infrastructure. The GIE (Groupement d'Intérêt économique—equivalent to a cooperative) of the guides of Niokolo-Kolo (GIE NIOKOLO) is responsible for guiding visitors and supports the park personnel in various activities including monitoring. In June 2014, John Rose, the UK representative of GIE NIOKOLO, received a UK£1,550 Conservation Award to organise a training workshop in ornithology. Paul Bristow kindly offered to sponsor UK£775 of this. The five-day course at Dar Salam was operated in late June 2014 by Dr Moussa Sèga Diop, a Senegalese ornithologist working at the Directorate of National Parks of the Ministry of Environment and Protection of Nature. Eleven eco-guides and four park guards received training. For one of the modules, a Wings Over Wetlands training kit was used to give the participants an understanding of the issues faced by migrants such as Garganey *Anas querquedula* en route from West Africa to their breeding grounds in Russia. Three days of classroom work were followed by two days of field work. The workshop was rated 'very good' or 'good' by 94% of participants, and has enabled the eco-guides and NKNP rangers to improve their bird identification and monitoring skills. In addition, the participants now better understand the importance of networks of sites (especially protected areas) for the conservation of migration flyways.

*Dr Chris Magin, ABC Conservation Officer on behalf of ABC Conservation Committee*



Ethiopian Swallow / Hirondelle d'Éthiopie *Hirundo aethiopica* (Lionel Sineux)

The ABC website (<http://www.africanbirdclub.org/conservation-fund-past-projects>) shows the complete list of conservation projects and awards made since the inception of the programme over one decade ago. **A remarkable total in excess of £200,000 has been donated during this period.** You can view many of the final project reports, including full versions of those summarised above, by clicking on the hyperlinks on the webpage.



# Africa Round-up

Compiled by Ron Demey, Guy M. Kirwan and Peter Lack



## General

### Palearctic–African migrant review of site selection hypotheses

Migrants breeding in the Palearctic and wintering in Africa have been the subject of a considerable body of work over the last few years. Now, Will Cresswell has undertaken a major review of site selection by these migrants. Specifically, he examined the evidence for what he terms the 'serial residency hypothesis'. This suggests that there is large-scale stochastic site selection by juvenile migrants, followed by site fidelity in second and subsequent years. He produces the hypothesis as a framework to explain migratory connectivity and population dynamics, and then how they might be affected by environmental change. Juveniles disperse widely, with birds breeding in the same area often using widely separated wintering areas. However, 'adults' often remain very site faithful from one winter to the next and even to their staging areas on migration. Juveniles therefore are likely to occur more often at unsuitable sites and therefore have lower survival. However, some will find suitable habitat that they will reuse, thereby promoting some overall resilience. Environmental change will affect some or all populations, so overall mean survival may be lower. Large-scale connectivity like this is also likely to lead to selection for generalist traits.

Source: *Ibis* 156, pp. 493–510

### Spanish European Rollers use several lengthy stopovers on autumn migration

Light-level geolocators have been attached to several European Rollers *Coracias garrulus* breeding in Spain. On their autumn migration to southern Africa, they followed the west coast of Africa stopping several



European Roller / Rollier d'Europe  
*Coracias garrulus* (Adam Riley)

times en route for quite lengthy periods. They then crossed the forest belt very quickly to reach their final winter quarters, mainly in Angola. These movements highlight the vulnerability of the species to environmental changes in many different areas.

Source: *J. Ornithol.* 155, pp. 1071–1075

### More on the satellite-tagged cuckoos

Since being fitted with a satellite tag by the British Trust for Ornithology (BTO) four years ago, 'Chris' the Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, named after TV presenter Chris Packham, has travelled >96,500 km. The UK population of Common Cuckoos has declined by 72% over the last 25 years; to discover the drivers behind this decline, the BTO fitted five cuckoos with satellite tags to study their movements year-round. The tags were believed to have a lifespan of 2–3 years and during the first migration three birds were lost, but a wealth of information was still gathered, revealing that British cuckoos winter in the Congo Basin in central Africa, as well as their routes to and from Europe. Of the first five cuckoos, 'Chris' is the only bird still alive and still transmitting live data, far exceeding original expectations. At the time of writing, 'Chris' is still in central Africa, having arrived at



Common Cuckoo / Coucou gris  
*Cuculus canorus* (Jacques de Spéville)

his favoured winter location on 25 October, completing a journey that began for the scientists following him in May 2011. Another, more recently tagged cuckoo, named 'BB', having been sponsored by the journal *British Birds*, is now back in Africa for its third winter. Chris Hewson, lead scientist working at the BTO on this project, said: 'Chris the cuckoo is a real hero of ornithology, the tag he is carrying has helped us to understand the pressures that he and our cuckoos face on what is a pretty hazardous migration to Africa. He has survived sand storms, hail storms, an exceptionally cold, wet summer, predators over the Mediterranean and in the Congo rainforest, and has crossed the Sahara Desert a whopping seven times since we started following him. We have everything crossed in the hope that he makes it back next spring.' You can follow all of the satellite-tagged Common Cuckoos on the BTO's website ([www.bto.org/cuckoos](http://www.bto.org/cuckoos)).

Source: *Br. Birds* 108, p. 9

### Migration routes and wintering areas of Dutch Northern Wheatears and Common Swifts revealed

In a special issue of *Limosa*, the journal of the Dutch Ornithologists' Union and Dutch Centre for Field



Ornithology, on bird tracking, the migration routes and wintering areas of Dutch Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe oenanthe* and Common Swifts *Apus apus* fitted with light-level geolocators are revealed. Of nine Northern Wheatears fitted with such devices in 2010, four returned and two yielded data. One adult male migrated 4,600 km to winter in southern Mali, whereas a young female travelled 4,200 km to southern Mauritania. Northbound migrations were completed faster (219–300 km / day) than southbound passage (107–127 km / day), when short stopovers were made in Europe and longer ones in southern Iberia or at the northern edge of the Sahara. In 2010–12, 12 Common Swifts were tracked; four were followed for two subsequent seasons. The swifts left their breeding sites in the last week of July and followed a south-southwesterly route to the Iberian Peninsula, where they often made a stopover. Having crossed the Mediterranean, they continued in a southerly or south-westerly direction across the Sahara, after which they flew mainly east via the Sahel, where they usually made one or more stopovers, often in Niger. They reached the rainforests of the Congo Basin on average in early September, following a 45-day trip of 8,914 km (or a mean 220 km / day, but if discounting days spent at stopover sites, they moved twice as fast: on average 420 km / day). Between late October and late February, all swifts spent most time in south-eastern Africa, especially Malaŵi and Mozambique. In early April, they commenced their return migration, firstly to Liberia, via the Gulf of Guinea, where they made a stopover. They crossed the Sahara somewhat further east than in autumn and arrived on their breeding grounds in the first week of May, after a mean journey of 8,852 km and a total migration average of 316 km / day (but an average travelling speed of 782 km / day). It is very important to learn the habitat preferences and feeding ecology of the swifts in, e.g. Mozambique and, especially, Liberia. If the latter

stopover should disappear due to, for example, large-scale destruction of preferred habitat or widespread introduction of a pesticide that wipes out essential prey, the results could be disastrous for Common Swifts in Europe.

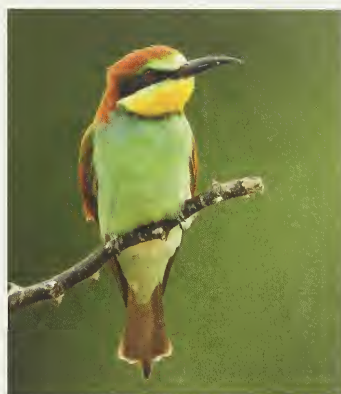
Source: *Limosa* 87, pp. 168–181

### Spring Alive

Last year in Europe and Asia, nearly 67,000 children enjoyed welcoming their avian visitors, learned about their conservation, and took photos as they engaged in Spring Alive migration-themed activities. Over 500 events were held, more than 1,200 teachers used Spring Alive resources in their lessons, and a photographic competition captured the magic of migration. Spring Alive encourages children and adults to take action for migratory birds. All across the flyway, BirdLife Partners and participants have been installing and repairing nestboxes, building nest platforms for swallows, monitoring nesting locations of bee-eaters, fitting transmitters to cuckoos, looking after stork nests, promoting stickers to prevent bird collisions with glass, campaigning against illegal hunting, and more. By posting their first sightings of Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*, White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*, Common Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus*, Common Swift *Apus apus* and European Bee-eater *Merops apiaster* on the [www.springalive.net](http://www.springalive.net) website, children from Europe, Central Asia and Africa create a real-time map of the incredible journeys these birds take. Last year,



White Stork / Cigogne blanche *Ciconia ciconia* (John Caddick)



European Bee-eater / Guêpier d'Europe *Merops apiaster* (Jacques de Spéville)

the Spring Alive website was adapted to complement the increased use of mobile phone for internet browsing in Eurasia and Africa. Spring Alive is now in its eighth year and for the first time, this year, children from Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Tunisia were also able to share in the wonder of bird migration and conservation as these countries joined a total of 54 participating countries in the campaign.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/spring-alive-springs-action-migratory-bird-conservation](http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/spring-alive-springs-action-migratory-bird-conservation)

### North Africa

#### Large colony of Eleonora's Falcon found in Algeria

An important colony of Eleonora's Falcons *Falco eleonorae* has recently been discovered on a small islet off the coast of western Algeria, near the



Eleonora's Falcon / Faucon d'Éléonore *Falco eleonorae* (Nicolaas van Zalinge)



border with Morocco. In 2013, 70 nests were counted.

Source: *Alauda* 82, pp. 355–356

### Breeding success at a Yellow-legged Gull colony

Afef Baaloudj and colleagues studied the breeding ecology of a colony of Yellow-legged Gulls *Larus michahellis* on the Algerian island of Srigina, over three consecutive years (2009–11) and attempted to identify factors influencing their breeding parameters. Most nests (71%) were located in the medium range of vegetation cover (20–80%). Egg-laying started in early March and extended to early May, peaking at the end of March. Mean clutch size varied significantly between years, from  $2.8 \pm 0.4$  (2009) to  $2.4 \pm 0.8$  (2011), with clutches exhibiting a seasonal decrease in mean egg volume. Hatching success was relatively low compared with studies in southern Europe and a mean of 1.5 chicks survived to 20 days. Colony size decreased steadily during the study period, dropping by 28.4%. Such decline may be due to breeding dispersal by adults following poor breeding performances. Predation by feral cats *Felis silvestris catus*, presumed to be the main cause of chick mortality, is perhaps adversely impacting breeding success and could lead to the virtual extirpation of Yellow-legged Gull and other breeding birds from the island.

Source: *African Zool.* 49, pp. 213–221



Yellow-legged Gull / Goéland leucophée *Larus michahellis* (Nicolaas van Zalinge)

### Resurgence of a national park in Algeria?

Djebel Babor Forest, in the northern Algerian Petite Kabylie range, consists of endemic fir *Abies numidica* and mixed forests around the country's second highest mountain (2,004 m), and is home to Algerian Nuthatch *Sitta ledanti*, Barbary Macaque *Macaca sylvanus* and Atlas Cedar *Cedrus atlantica*—all three species are classified as Endangered. Gazetted as a national park in 1921, it was declassified in 1985. It is threatened by fires, overgrazing and illegal logging. With support from the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) Mediterranean programme, the Association de Réflexion, d'Échanges et d'Actions pour l'Environnement et le Développement (AREA-ED) aims to re-establish Djebel Babor as a national park and create a buffer zone around it to help ensure the area's preservation, in partnership with the Algerian National Agronomic Institute for Research and the Direction Générale des Forêts. Meetings with local communities to discuss the future of this national park have taken place and more are planned.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/africa/news/resurgence-national-park-algeria](http://www.birdlife.org/africa/news/resurgence-national-park-algeria)

### Greater Flamingos bred successfully in Tunisia in 2014

In 2014, a small colony of c.100 Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus roseus* nested successfully for the first time at Korba Lagoons, an Important Bird Area in northern Tunisia. Les Amis des Oiseaux, BirdLife in Tunisia, quickly mobilised its members and partners to help ring 45 young, also making this the first time flamingos have been ringed in the country. The last successful breeding by flamingos in Tunisia was in 2007 at Thyna Salines.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/africa/news/firsts-flamingos-tunisia](http://www.birdlife.org/africa/news/firsts-flamingos-tunisia)

**Endangered Barbary Macaque requires more forest in Morocco**  
Ifrane National Park in the Middle Atlas Mountains of Morocco is

not only an Important Bird Area, its mixed Atlas Cedar *Cedrus atlantica* and oak forests also harbour the last large population of the Endangered Barbary Macaque *Macaca sylvanus*. Sadly, these forests have been over-exploited and overgrazed, resulting in fragmentation and isolating macaque populations. As part of the Conservation Action Plan for the Barbary Macaque in Morocco, the Moroccan Primate Conservation Foundation (MPC) and the University of Rennes (in cooperation with the Moroccan High Commissary of Water and Forests, with help from the School for Forestry) is mapping the degree of landscape connectivity, and choosing priority corridors where restoration is needed. This is all the more urgent as climate change will contribute to the decrease in the range of cedar trees. Whereas Barbary Macaque females remain in their natal groups, males migrate to other groups during the mating season, permitting the spread of genes. However, due to present habitat fragmentation, migration is limited, leading to inbreeding. Fragmentation also causes 'crowding' of macaque groups, resulting in competition for food and large overlap in home ranges.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/africa/news/reconnecting-forest-endangered-barbary-macaque](http://www.birdlife.org/africa/news/reconnecting-forest-endangered-barbary-macaque)

### Clamorous Reed Warblers in Sudan

Recent surveys of the Nile Valley in northern Sudan by Jens & Heidi Hering has proven that Clamorous Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus stentoreus* of the nominate subspecies are breeding at several localities, south at least as far as Merowe Dam, c.700 km upriver from the nearest known breeding locality in Egypt. On the Red Sea coast, it is *A. s. brunnescens* that breeds, in mangrove habitats.

Source: *Dutch Birding* 36, pp. 252–255



**Best breeding season yet for Mediterranean Monk Seal colony**

Mercedes Muñoz Cañas, an IUCN Member, has provided encouraging news from the Mediterranean Monk Seal *Monachus monachus* sanctuary at Cabo Blanco, Mauritania. The project team counted 67 seal births at the colony even before the end of the 2014 breeding season. According to Mercedes this is a new record for the ‘Costa de las focas’, a sanctuary that constitutes the biggest hope for the recovery of this Critically Endangered species and is a terrestrial-maritime reserve that protects the three breeding caves for approximately half the total world population of Mediterranean Monk Seals. Since conservation work commenced in the late 1990s, the colony’s population has more than doubled, from 109 to 250 animals. Significantly, the average annual birth rate has also doubled from 30 to 60 in recent years. All these successes would not have been possible without daily surveillance. To recover through normal breeding, the seals first must be free from human disturbance. Nearby, lies Nouadhibou, the second largest city in Mauritania with a growing population. Before the reserve was created in 2001, many barnacle collectors, line fishermen and fishing pirogues were active in the vicinity of the breeding caves. This created stressful and dangerous situations for the seals. While there was no direct interaction harming the species, human activity was scaring the seals, forcing them to leave new-born pups alone. The presence of fishing gear in the water compounded this problem—inexperienced pups and youngsters were more at risk of becoming entangled and even drowning as a result. Thus, while 67 new pups is a record, the ongoing work of surveillance and awareness raising must continue.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin  
November 2014

**Atlantic Ocean islands**

**Latest Cape Verdes bird report**

The eighth in the series of reports on birds in the Cape Verde Islands, following publication of the BOU Checklist, by Kees Hazevoet includes records of nine taxa new to the archipelago, namely Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (Boa Vista, December 2013), White Stork *C. ciconia* (São Vicente, September–December 2012; Boa Vista, February and July 2014), Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (Sal, October 2013), Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (Santa Luzia, September 2011), Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (São Vicente, December 2012), White-winged Tern *C. leucopterus* (Santiago, December 2011), Little Swift *Apus affinis* (Boa Vista, December 2013), Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* (Sal, January 2008) and Yellow-browed Warbler *Phylloscopus inornatus* (Santiago, March 2013; São Nicolau, January 2014). The islands’ total avifauna now includes 228 species, an increase of more

than 80 species on the total known in the mid 1990s. Also presented are data on several breeding birds, including the alarming situation of the Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* population, of which just three individuals remain in the archipelago (see p. 17). Several raptor species are also highly threatened and have already become extinct on some islands. Following its expansion through north-west Africa and the Canary Islands, Eurasian Collared Dove *Streptopelia decaocto* has now also become established on at least three of the Cape Verde Islands (Santiago, Sal and Boa Vista).

Source: Zool. Caboverdiana 5,  
pp. 29–56

**Cape Verde Purple Herons recolonise São Domingos**

During a visit to São Domingos, on the island of Santiago, in early September 2014, Samir Martins observed a pair of Cape Verde Purple Herons *Ardea purpurea bournei* (sometimes recognised as a separate species) building a nest in a tree. Local people informed him that the herons had been nesting there for at least three years, and indicated that the total number may be around five pairs. Purple Herons were first discovered breeding at São Domingos in 1951, but the latest observation is the first report of nesting there since the 1960s, when the population was estimated at 30 pairs (1963) and 50–60 pairs (1966). For many years a huge tree at Boa Entrada was the only known breeding site (discovered in 1963), with the number of occupied nests there not exceeding six in the late 1980s and the site appears to have been abandoned since the start of the present millennium. In 1991, another colony was found at Banana, Ribeira Montanha, with up to 20–25 occupied nests, and in 2006 a pair bred at Ribeira Cuba, Serra Malagueta. The future of the population is perhaps currently somewhat less bleak than it seemed until recently. Regular monitoring of all known breeding sites remains a requirement to obtain a better picture of current population size and



Black Stork / Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra* (John Caddick)



Whiskered Tern / Guifette moustac *Chlidonias hybrida* (Désiré Darling)





Cape Verde Purple Heron / Héron de Bourne *Ardea purpurea bournei*  
(Augusto Faustino)

breeding success, while protective measures (at the handful of nesting trees) are urgently needed.

Source: A Cagarra 7, pp. 2–3

### Action to protect the Near Threatened Cape Verde Shearwater

Biosfera I, a national NGO for the protection of the environment in Cape Verde founded in 2006, is attempting to prevent the persecution of Cape Verde Shearwater *Calonectris edwardsii*, mainly the annual killing of thousands of chicks for food. This repeated ‘harvesting’ has led to the decline of the species, which at present is listed as Near Threatened. To address the threat, Biosfera has been working with local communities, especially fishermen and former hunters, on Raso and Branco islets, where 75% of the shearwater population nests, to raise awareness and monitor the species. A Species Action Plan for the conservation of Cape Verde Shearwater is in preparation.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/news/country/cape-verde](http://www.birdlife.org/news/country/cape-verde)

### Frigatebirds at Curral Velho get a little help

The situation of the Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* on Boa Vista is highly precarious: just one male and two females remain

and not a single young has fledged for >10 years. The reasons for this failure are not entirely clear, but the lack of suitable nesting sites is suspected to be an important cause. To improve the situation, several artificial nests were installed on Curral Velho islet in November 2014. It is hoped that these will be accepted by the frigatebirds and lead to successful reproduction.

Source: A Cagarra 8, pp. 4–5

### Breeding platforms for Ospreys sited on Boa Vista

Many of the c.80 Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* pairs in the Cape Verde nest on the ground, usually on cliff ledges and rocky promontories. Ospreys on Boa Vista have been regularly monitored since 2000 and their reproductive success found to be low: only five young successfully fledged from the 35 active nests monitored in 2012–14. This has been attributed to extremely high nest depredation by Brown-necked Ravens *Corvus ruficollis* and feral cats, and harassment by people. To improve the breeding success of the Osprey population, the General Directorate of Environment (DGA) and Bios-CV have erected several artificial nesting platforms in coastal areas where low productivity or breeding failure have been the norm in previous seasons.

Source: A Cagarra 8, pp. 3–4

## West and Central Africa

### Paleartic migrants in West Africa

It has been known for many years that many migrants use the Sahel zone, but there have been few intensive field studies of these birds’ ecology in the area. Phil Atkinson *et al.* brought together a group of experts and consulted more to assess the main Sahelian habitats used by migrants. Sixty-eight species that exhibited their strongest declines 1970–90 occurred mainly in more open habitats, as opposed to those whose main declines occurred in 1990–2000, with these latter species being more associated with shrubs and trees. The populations of most

migrants wintering in the Sahel are now mostly stable or increasing as rainfall is now near to the longer term average. But those using the Sahel region only as a staging area are now mostly in rapid decline.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. 24, pp. 477–491

### Rainfall in the Sahel is a significant driver of changes in migrant numbers in the long term

Meanwhile, in a separate study, the effects of rainfall in the Sahel region on the breeding numbers of 16 species of Palearctic–African migrants have been scrutinised over 25- and 40-year periods, examining the proportion of the annual changes in numbers of breeders that could be accounted for by environmental variables in their winter quarters. Over a 40-year period, rainfall in the Sahel had positive effects on the numbers of six of the nine species wintering there, and in three of the seven species whose final winter quarters are further south. The analysis was repeated over a 25-year period by when some vegetation data were also available, and 12 of the 16 species again showed weather-related survival effects.

Source: J. Ornithol. 155, pp. 905–917

### West African mangroves: an indispensable haven for millions of Palearctic warblers

The importance of West African mangroves for birds is inadequately known. A study carried out by Leo Zwarts and co-workers found that, in January–March 2014, bird density in West African *Avicennia* mangroves was 21 birds / ha, whereas in *Rhizophora* it was 11 birds / ha. Palearctic species were dominant in the northernmost mangroves (14–16°N), but further south (11–12°N) residents were as numerous as Palearctic migrants. European Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* was the commonest winter visitor at 12–16°N, with an estimated 4–6 million individuals, or perhaps 30–50% of the entire European population. Mortality of this species crossing the Sahara on spring migration is higher when the



species' Sudan-Guinean wintering areas are affected by drought during the preceding winter. Birds wintering in mangroves suffer the same fate, as mangroves in the Sahel are subject to massive die offs in drought years. Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*, which resides north of 13°N, had an estimated wintering population in the mangroves of 0.9 million birds, or c.10% of the species' global population. The study demonstrates that West African mangroves are extremely important for certain Palearctic migrants and that local conditions, which fluctuate in synchrony with rainfall in the Sahel, are of paramount importance.

Source: *Ardea* 105, pp. 121–130

**Old specimens yield an addition to Côte d'Ivoire's avifauna**

Examination of the collection of 1,933 specimens of 297 species secured by D. Parelius in Côte d'Ivoire in 1964–69 and housed at the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago, USA, revealed that it contained six specimens of Rufous Cisticola *Cisticola rufus*. These are the only, and previously unpublished, records of the species for the country. The specimens were all collected in the north, at Ferkessédougou, Korhogo and Boundiali. Data pertaining to the Parelius collection are freely available in general online museum collection databases (e.g. VertNet, ORNIS), as well as the Field Museum's own online portal.

Source: *Malimbus* 36, pp. 119–121

**Sanderling population in Ghana increases**

The number of Sanderlings *Calidris alba* using the East Atlantic flyway has substantially increased in recent years. Twenty years of monthly counts at wetland sites along the 550 km-long Ghanaian coast parallels this increase. Indeed, the local Sanderling population increased almost fourfold, from an average monthly total of c.1,350 individuals to 4,850. Highest totals were noted in September–October. However, those sites with the largest numbers at the start of the survey exhibited the smallest relative increases. This

is consistent with a buffer effect and suggests that with an increasing overall population, the best-quality sites are at carrying capacity and that additional birds are forced to use lower-quality sites. The preferred site in Ghana is a beach near the village of Esaima between the Amansuri and Ankobra estuaries, in the south-west, where the birds mainly forage on the small bivalve *Donax pulchellus*. Despite that a significant part of the global Sanderling population depends on this site, it is at present wholly unprotected.

Source: *Ardea* 105, pp. 131–137

**Raptors in Yankari Game Reserve, Nigeria**

A survey undertaken in April–July 2008 to estimate the raptor population in and around Yankari Game Reserve, revealed that the 224,400-ha reserve, located in the east-central part of the country in the Sudan Savanna Zone, still holds 37 raptor species, most of them medium-sized. Vultures seem to have declined, with two species having apparently been lost. Overall encounter rates during transects within the reserve were 54 raptors per 100 km (total 1635.6 km). Grasshopper Buzzard *Buteo rufipennis* was the most frequently encountered species in savanna, with other common species being Dark Chanting Goshawk *Melierax metabates*, Grey Kestrel *Falco ardosiaceus* and Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*. Secretary-bird *Sagittarius serpentarius* was noted just once. In gallery forest, the most commonly encountered species was Palm-nut Vulture *Gypohierax angolensis*. In the unprotected area, overall encounter rate was 47 raptors per 100 km (c.330 km), with Black Kite *Milvus migrans* being the most frequently encountered species, followed by Grasshopper Buzzard and Fox Kestrel *F. alopecurus*.

Source: *Malimbus* 36, pp. 67–75

**Stock take of the avifauna of the Ibadan area, Nigeria**

Survey work carried out in 2009–13, combined with a literature search, revealed that 398 bird species are

now known from the Ibadan area, in south-west Nigeria, of which 322 have been recorded since 2002. The International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) campus, which occupies c.1,000 ha, holds at least 269 of these. The IITA campus is an Important Bird Area (IBA) and includes a secondary dry semi-deciduous forest reserve of c.360 ha, harbouring c.137 bird species, with the rest of the campus, apart from the built-up area, consisting of lakes, rice paddies, farm plots, marshes and bushes. Twenty-five species plus 13 vagrants were new to the IBA and the Ibadan area, having not been detected prior to 2002, whilst at least 68 species plus an additional 62 vagrants reported by earlier studies have not been recorded recently. Forest specialists, including many bulbuls (Pycnonotidae) and hornbills (Bucerotidae) appear to have declined, whereas forest-edge species and generalists have increased. The IITA campus has become an 'island' IBA of great avifaunal diversity surrounded by a dramatically modified anthropogenic landscape.

Source: *Malimbus* 36, pp. 76–105

**Sexing monomorphic Western Mountain Greenbuls using morphometrics**

Western Mountain Greenbul *Arizelocichla* (= *Andropadus*) *tephrolaemus* is a poorly known monomorphic forest species. Eric Djomo and colleagues investigated if morphological measurements could be used to discriminate between sexes of the species, using a sample of birds captured in two forest types on Mount Cameroon. They used discriminant function analysis based on a combination of traits to develop models to discriminate between sexes. The sex of birds predicted from these models was compared with molecular sexing of the same individuals. Discriminant analysis revealed that a discriminant function incorporating wing length, tail length and bill depth permitted 74% of greenbuls to be sexed correctly based on morphometrics alone. Sex ratios varied between montane and lowland forests, with the former



having a higher proportion of males (70.5% and 54.6%, respectively), but the difference was not statistically significant. Cloacal sizes did not differ between males and females, and males do not develop large cloacal protuberances while breeding. This is in agreement with low predicted levels of sperm competition in this species.

Source: African Zool. 49, pp. 247–252

### African Pygmy Goose, new to São Tomé, and a mystery kingfisher

A female African Pygmy Goose *Nettion auritus* was photographed in a sheltered part of the Io Grande River, at Dona Eugénia, south-east São Tomé, on 21 July 2011. This is the first record for the island. Along the same river, near its confluence with the Ana Chaves River, an unidentified *Halcyon* kingfisher was observed. To date, the only known *Halcyon* on São Tomé & Príncipe is Blue-breasted Kingfisher *H. malimbica*, of which the endemic race *dryas* is resident on Príncipe.

Source: Malimbus 36, pp. 116–117

### Major ivory haul seized in Cameroon

A haul of ivory worth more than US\$190,000 has been seized in Cameroon, one of the largest single seizures made in the country. The discovery of 39 Forest Elephant *Loxodonta cyclotis* tusks was made by eco-guards at the Dja Biosphere Reserve, following a tip-off from an intelligence network supported by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). The tusks were concealed in a truck intercepted in Djoum, in southern Cameroon. The illegal cargo weighed 91 kg, with each tusk weighing <4 kg. The number and small size of the tusks indicates that at least 20 young elephants were slaughtered. They were most likely destined for South East Asia, where demand for ivory jewellery and trinkets has fuelled a 60% decline in Forest Elephants since 2001. A local businessman who owned the truck carrying the ivory is awaiting trial. Traffickers in Cameroon can face up to three years in prison for one tusk, but

prosecutions are rare. Prof. Jonathan Baillie, Director of Conservation at ZSL, said: “Criminals involved in the illegal ivory trade must face heavy penalties if we are to have any chance of stopping it. People buying ivory also need to take a hard look at themselves and ask whether trinkets are worth the slaughter of these magnificent, majestic animals.” ZSL has been working with local partners in Cameroon since 2007 to protect Forest Elephants. Conservation activities include supporting law enforcement, surveying elephant populations and empowering local communities to fight wildlife crime through community surveillance networks.

Source: IUCN SSC Species e-bulletin November 2014

### Oil exploration: the latest threat to Virunga National Park

In defiance of local protests and international opposition, the oil company Soco International has commenced seismic testing as part of its controversial oil exploration project in Virunga National Park, in eastern DR Congo, in 2014. In doing so, the company is ignoring national and international laws protecting this UNESCO World Heritage Site, as well as the results of its own environmental impact assessment, which indicates that exploratory drilling could lead to air pollution, pulmonary diseases, water contamination, invasive species or habitat loss in the fragile ecosystem. Portions of Lake Edward will reportedly be closed to fishing while Soco searches for subterranean oil reserves, and if such deposits are found, the company intends to drill exploratory wells in the lake. This will jeopardise the freshwater supply of >50,000 households and the livelihoods of those who depend on the lake’s fishery, which generates an estimated US\$30 million annually.

Source: [www.wwf.org.uk/news\\_feed.cfm?7134/WWF-condemns-Soco-seismic-testing-in-Virunga](http://www.wwf.org.uk/news_feed.cfm?7134/WWF-condemns-Soco-seismic-testing-in-Virunga)

## East Africa

### Hinde’s Babbler numbers are stable but potentially vulnerable

The preferred habitat of the Kenyan endemic Hinde’s Babbler *Turdoides hindei* is farmland left fallow or abandoned, both of which permit *Lantana* scrub to develop. Phil Shaw and his colleagues have surveyed three Important Bird Areas within its core range and found little change in the species’ abundance between 2000/01 and 2011. The overall range was shown to have increased between the 1900–70 period and 1991–2011, but this was perhaps just apparent (not real) due to the discovery of several previously unknown sites. Numbers were found to be very dependent on scrub cover, with a 22% loss of cover meaning the loss of one group of the species, and a 6% loss of cover translating into a reduction of one individual. This babbler still relies heavily on a passive form of land sharing, i.e. the preferred habitat is available by default rather than design. The species certainly warrants a watching brief and perhaps a more proactive approach to ensure its long-term survival.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern. 24, pp. 453–465



Hinde’s Babbler / Cratérope de Hinde  
*Turdoides hindei* (Nik Borrow)





and potential food items provide evidence that adult pochards are insectivorous, favouring caddis fly larvae. Macro-invertebrate density in the benthos of Matsaborimena is low. Adults spend 38% of daylight hours foraging, mainly in the shallowest water. However Matsaborimena is steep-sided and has no areas shallow enough for diving ducklings to feed. The authors of this recent study, Andrew Bamford *et al.*, conclude that these lakes do not represent good breeding habitat and the species' persistence, and not at other sites, is probably due to a lack of the human-induced habitat degradation that has impacted many other wetlands in Madagascar.

Source: Bird Conserv. Intern.  
doi:10.1017/S0959270914000033

## Southern Africa

### Bird conservation and research in Angola

In its annual report, published in December 2014, the Associação Angolana para Aves e Natureza ('Angolan Association for Birds and Nature'), announces that good progress was made with two main projects: at Mount Moco tree planting was accelerated and the established indigenous tree nursery expanded, and 80 fuel-efficient stoves were delivered to the community at Kanjonde to reduce their reliance on firewood. At Kumbira, seven weeks of field study were undertaken by Ph.D. student Aimy Cáceres and colleagues, to determine the range size and habitat use of the Endangered endemic Gabela Akalat *Sheppardia gabela*. Tree biomass was evaluated to establish the potential for a carbon credits project. Additionally, the registration certificate for the Association has been issued; it is hoped that the official launch will take place in 2015. The bilingual book on *The Common Birds of Luanda* has been completed and will be presented during the launch of the NGO.

Source: Michael Mills in litt.  
January 2015



Gabela Akalat / Rougegorge de Gabela  
*Sheppardia gabela* (Nik Borrow)

### Good news for seabirds off Namibia

Following a meeting with the BirdLife's Albatross Task Force (ATF), the Ministry of Fisheries and Marine Resources in Namibia has introduced new fishery regulations that should practically eliminate seabird mortality at one of the most destructive fisheries in the world. The new fishery regulations introduced on 1 November 2014 will require all trawl and longline vessels to use bird-scaring lines, and for longline vessels to use improved line weighting. The fishing industry in Namibia, led by local fishing companies, has been cooperative with the proposed conservation measures, with several companies already adopting voluntary use of bird-scaring lines. The regulations will ensure the measures are adopted across the whole fleet. Namibia already has high levels of observer coverage in their fisheries, which means it will be easy to identify compliance with these new regulations.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/namibia-takes-positive-steps-save-30000-seabirds-year](http://www.birdlife.org/worldwide/news/namibia-takes-positive-steps-save-30000-seabirds-year)

### More dark-morph Black Sparrowhawks occur in newly colonised areas of South Africa

Morph ratios of polymorphic species are often clinal in their distribution. Arjun Amar and his colleagues have been studying the different forms of Black Sparrowhawk *Accipiter*

*melanoleucus* across South Africa. The species' dark morph is much commoner in the recently colonised south-west of the country. In the Cape area c.80% are dark, which clines to less than 20% in the north-east, approximately 1,400 km away. Greater numbers of dark birds occur in areas where a higher proportion of annual rainfall falls during the winter breeding months, and there are also relationships with altitude and an interaction between breeding rainfall amounts and temperature. These results suggest the dark morph is adaptation and not related to the founder effect and genetic drift in newly colonised areas. In theory, polymorphic species may be better adapted to cope with climate change and expand more swiftly under novel conditions or in new areas.

Source: Ibis 156, pp. 627–638

### Decline of Secretary-bird documented

South Africa's Secretary-bird *Sagittarius serpentarius* population is declining. A recent paper published in the open-access journal *PLoS ONE* uses data from the Coordinated Avifaunal Roadcounts and bird atlas projects to assess the species' current status. Remarkably, and most alarmingly, the most serious decline is occurring in Kruger National Park, where reporting rates decreased in 37 (95%) of the 39 quarter-degree grid cells. The great majority of Secretary-birds occur in natural habitats, except in the wheat-growing regions of Western Cape, where at least half of the birds appear to have adapted to agricultural lands. A probable cause of its overall decline is habitat loss due to land transformation. However, this cannot be the case in Kruger National Park, where widespread bush encroachment is probably a major threat. Other threats may include powerline and fence collisions, occasional poisoning by insecticides, and human disturbance.

Source: PLoS ONE 9(5): e96772.  
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0096772

### Results of Cape Parrot censuses

Cape Parrot *Poicephalus robustus* is a forest specialist and—if one accepts its split from Brown-necked Parrot *P. fuscicollis*—a South African endemic, whose numbers have reportedly decreased. During the annual Cape Parrot Big Birding Day, initiated in 1998, parrots are counted in Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces in indigenous forests and sites where this nomadic is known to forage for fruit. Fifteen years of censuses demonstrate that in almost all years <1,600 Cape Parrots were recorded in the wild. An apparent slight increase may be largely explained by better coverage of suitable habitat and stabilisation of the population since 2005. Since the 1970s its distribution appears to have remained largely unchanged.

Source: Ostrich 85, pp. 273–280

### The ecology and morphology of Protea Seedeater

Protea Seedeater *Crithagra leucopterus* is one of six passerines endemic to the Fynbos biome, in South Africa, and is the least known of these, with very few data on breeding and habitat use. Through nest observations and a bird-ringing scheme in the eastern fynbos, Alan Lee and Phoebe Barnard have provided new information on habitat use, breeding and population biometrics. They documented changes in capture rates for a suite of birds in relation to a fire event and use of burnt and unburnt sites within Blue Hill Nature Reserve. Seedeaters were recorded nesting in mature fynbos, but feeding in recently burnt fynbos on freshly released protea seeds, suggesting the species benefits from small-scale burns that create a landscape of mixed veld ages. The birds weighed less and had shorter wings compared to those in the western fynbos. Further habitat-use and life-history information on the species is required to guide conservation management plans, especially in light of changing fire regimes in the biome.

Source: African Zool. 49, pp. 295–300

### Dr Ross Wanless wins Environmentalist of the Year award

Dr Ross Wanless, from BirdLife South Africa's Seabird Conservation Programme and the BirdLife Marine Programme, has been awarded the prestigious SAB Environmentalist of the Year Award. The SAB award recognises not just hard work over many years, but an individual who has been instrumental in delivering significant, lasting conservation outcomes. BirdLife South Africa's extraordinary work through the BirdLife Marine Programme to prevent the extinction of albatrosses and petrels is one such example. Under the leadership of Wanless, the programme has used science, advocacy, persistence and win-win solutions to turn the tide against fisheries impacts on iconic seabirds. Earlier this year his team announced that their efforts in the South African hake trawl fishery had caused a reduction in seabird mortality of up to 90% (cf. Bull. ABC 21: 130). "It's a real honour to receive this sort of recognition, but I do need to acknowledge that I have an amazing team at BirdLife South Africa, and this award is theirs as much as mine", said Dr Wanless.

Source: [www.birdlife.org/africa/news/birdlife-south-africa%E2%80%99s-dr-ross-wanless-wins-environmentalist-year-award](http://www.birdlife.org/africa/news/birdlife-south-africa%E2%80%99s-dr-ross-wanless-wins-environmentalist-year-award)

### Predicting survival rates from textbooks and databases

Survival rates are fairly critical for conservation measures, but for many species there are simply too few data from ringing returns (for example) to produce any reliable figures. So Yvonne Cunningham and colleagues analysed the survival rates, calculated from ringing returns, of 67 species in South Africa for which sufficient data exist with a series of other demographic and ecological variables, which are more readily available, to try to predict survival rates for 'few data' species. The models performed very well, with mean clutch size and mean body mass being the most influential of those variables

considered. Other variables included were mean age of first breeding, diet and migratory tendencies.

Source: Ibis 156, pp. 741–756

### Taxonomic proposals

#### Black-fronted Francolin: highly endangered

A francolin specimen, collected in May 1929 in the Mega area, in the southern Ethiopian Highlands, was described as a new species—Black-fronted Francolin *Pternistis atrifrons*—in 1930, but was subsequently treated as a local race of Chestnut-naped Francolin *P. castaneicollis*. As the taxon had apparently only been very rarely observed since the early 1940s, Till Töpfer and co-workers searched for it in May 2012 and May 2013. They recorded at least 12 Black-fronted Francolins at five locations within a 25-km radius of the town of Mega. The birds inhabited semi-open woodland at 1,480–2,223 m (higher than the other two francolins in the area, Crested *P. sephaena* and Yellow-necked Francolins *P. leucoscepus*), where the original juniper forest has almost completely been destroyed, primarily by agricultural expansion, over-grazing and firewood and timber collection. Adult males had a bald yellow patch behind the eye, a feature that had not been described previously and which no other race of *P. castaneicollis* seems to show (although, interestingly, other francolin species do). Additionally, molecular results revealed that the taxon is closely related to the different subspecies of Chestnut-naped Francolin, with which they form the sister group to a clade comprising Erckel's Francolin *P. erckelii* and Djibouti Francolin *P. ochropectus*. If all characters are taken together, assigning species rank to Black-fronted Francolin appears justified—as was already done by del Hoyo & Collar (2014). *HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World*. Vol. 1). Its current range (perhaps not larger than 300 km<sup>2</sup>) and population are bound



to be very small, making Black-fronted Francolin one of the most endangered galliforms in Africa.

Source: Vert. Zool. 64, pp. 261–271

### Phylogeny of *Agapornis* lovebirds

All *Agapornis* lovebird species have been found to comprise a single group, except Black-collared Lovebird *A. swindernianus*, which is a sister taxon to this group. The complete phylogeny suggests that the last common ancestor of *Agapornis* originated on the African continent and it was a more arboreal forest dweller, probably with a preference for small seeds. Therefore the preference shown by the Black-collared for more open woodland and a change to a more granivorous diet must have evolved after its divergence from the other species.

Source: J. Ornithol. 155, pp. 581–589

### Nomenclature of the Cape White-eye

The recent scientific literature employs three different binomial names for the southern African endemic, Cape White-eye, namely *Zosterops capensis*, *Z. pallidus* and *Z. virens*. This unacceptable inconsistency reflects the current contention regarding white-eye systematics. Recent molecular work by Oatley *et al.* has led to the suggestion that *Z. virens* and *Z. capensis* are the same species, with *Z. pallidus* (Orange River White-eye) representing a separate species, with a recommendation that *Z. virens* be used for Cape White-eye, based on page priority (both names, *virens* and *capensis*, were introduced in the same work). Further research by Lindy Thompson and Barry Taylor has underscored this finding, although additional molecular studies to clarify the taxonomy of southern African white-eyes are recommended.

Source: Ostrich 85, pp. 197–199

### Hume's Owl is not all that it seems

Away from Sinai, in Africa, Hume's Owl *Strix butleri* is known only from the deserts abutting the Egyptian Red Sea coast, where it was only discovered recently (*cf. Bull. ABC*

8: 18–20), although there are also some possible (but unconfirmed) records from the island of Socotra. Recently, Magnus Robb and his colleagues described a population of owls, obviously related to Hume's Owl, in the mountains of northern Oman as Omani Owl *S. omanensis* (albeit based solely on photographs and sound-recordings). However, more recent genetic and morphological analyses have now revealed that the type specimen of Hume's Owl, the geographical provenance of which is open to doubt, differs significantly from all other specimens previously ascribed to this species. Despite the absence of vocal data definitively linked to the same population as the type specimen, it seems that two species-level taxa are involved, principally because the degree of molecular differentiation is close to that seen in other taxa of *Strix* traditionally recognised as species. The authors of the new study consider that there is clear evidence of at least some morphological congruence between the *butleri* type and the phenotype described as '*omanensis*' and that of the three potential hypotheses to explain the current situation—that '*omanensis*' is a synonym of *butleri*, that '*omanensis*' is a subspecies of *butleri*, or that '*omanensis*' and *butleri* both represent species taxa—the first is the most parsimonious

explanation. Other populations (including those in Egypt) heretofore ascribed to *S. butleri* were described as a new species, Desert Tawny Owl *S. hadorami*.

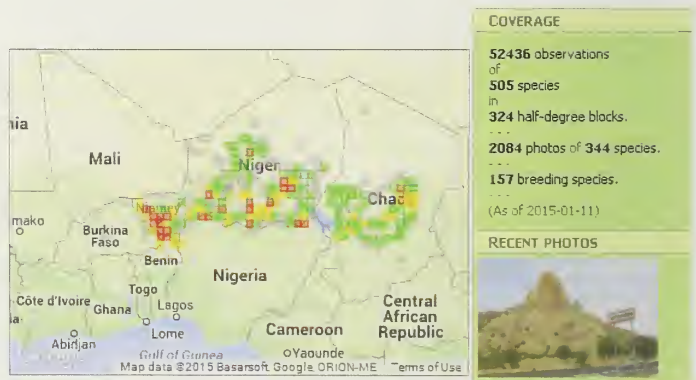
Source: Zootaxa 3904, pp. 28–50

### Internet resources

#### West African Bird DataBase

The online, open-access and bilingual (French and English) Niger Bird DataBase has recently been expanded to include Chad and Burkina Faso. Its name has therefore been changed to the West African Bird DataBase (WABDaB). Thanks to the Sahara Conservation Fund, 4,700 records and numerous photographs from Chad have already been included. In total WABDaB now has >2,000 photographs of 344 species. New and historic bird records from all three countries, including of common species and especially of breeding, as well as associated images, are very welcome at [www.wabdab.org](http://www.wabdab.org). To upload data a very simple registration procedure is required. WABDaB also contains information on identification of a number of difficult species pairs, with additional ones being occasionally added, as well as on bird names and stories in local languages and cultures.

Source: Ulf Liedén and Joost Brouwer in litt. January 2015



Coverage of the West African Bird DataBase (WABDaB) as of 1 January 2015.

Red half-degree squares have >500 records.

Couverture du « West African Bird DataBase (WABDaB) » au 1er janvier 2015.

Les carrés rouges de 30 minutes de côté ont >500 mentions.

### **Scopus now Open Access**

*Scopus*, the peer-reviewed journal of the Bird Committee of the East Africa Natural History Society, is now Open Access. Since 1977, *Scopus* has published original material on all aspects of ornithology in the East African region. Volumes 28–34 are freely available on African Journals Online at <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/scopus>; click on 'Archives'. Volumes 1–27 are freely available via the Biodiversity Heritage Library (the other volumes will be uploaded to BHL soon)

at <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/64405#/summary>. For back issues of Special Supplements (Birds of Somalia, Birds of the Kampala Area, and Birds of South Sudan) visit <http://biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/67967#/summary>. Volumes 1–25 (1977–2005) can be searched by author name or species via the link to the reference index at the foot of <http://naturekenya.org/content/scopus>. The only volume not freely available online is the recently published Special Supplement on Ringing at Ngulia, Kenya 1969–

2012, which is available in hard copy at Ksh 1,000, or the equivalent in other major currencies.

*Source: Scopus Editorial Team in litt.*  
January 2015

### **Madagascar wildfowl bibliography**

Glyn Young has recently updated his bibliography of endemic Madagascan wildfowl and you can download the .pdf here <http://www.ducksg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/The-endemic-wildfowl-of-Madagascar-annotated-bibliography-v2014.pdf>

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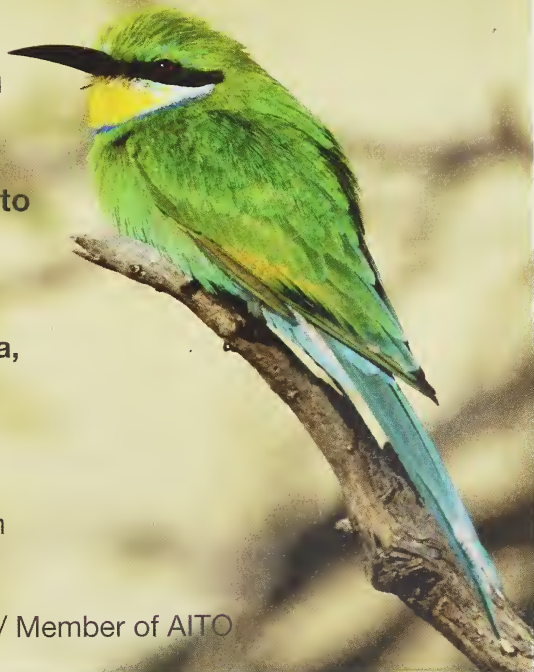
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# Survey of a recently discovered subpopulation of the Critically Endangered Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis* in the Taita Hills, Kenya

Luca Borghesio<sup>a</sup>, Lawrence Wagura<sup>b</sup> and Mwangi Githiru<sup>b</sup>

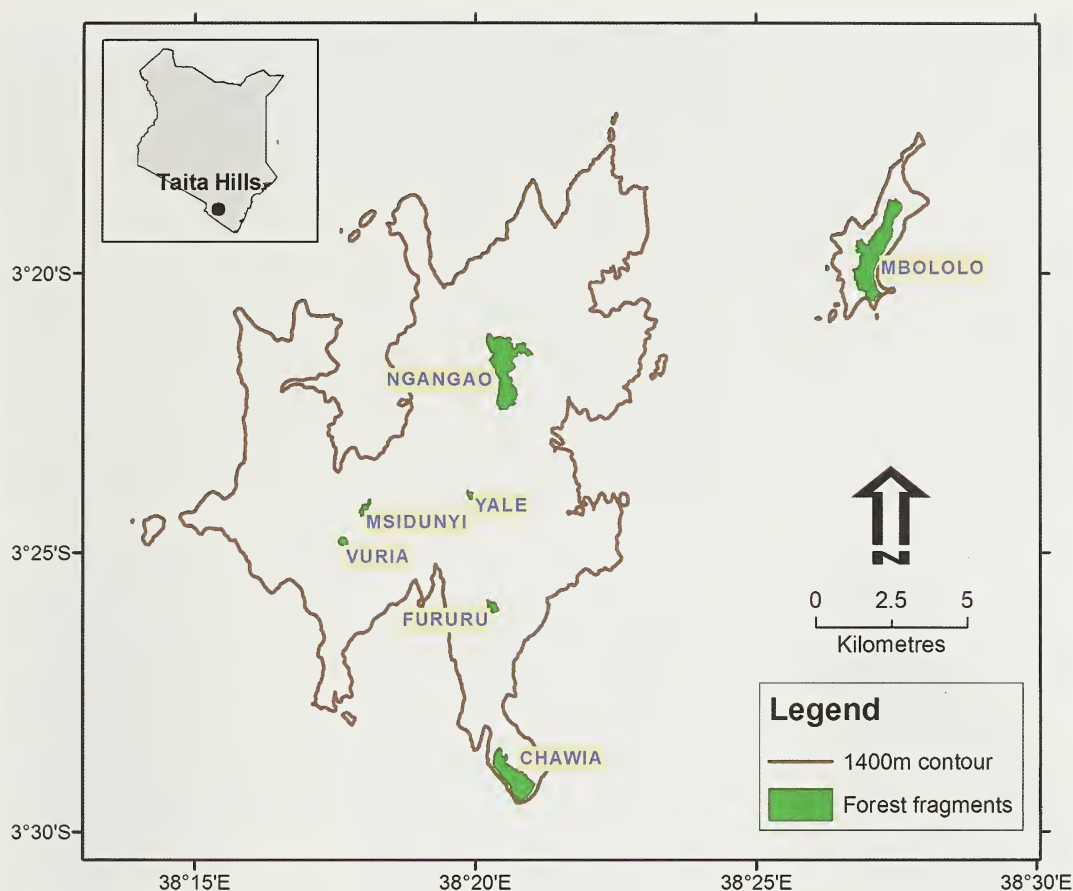
**Inventaire d'une sous-population de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscicularis* récemment découverte dans les Taita Hills, Kenya.** En octobre 2011, les auteurs ont découvert une sous-population préalablement inconnue de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscicularis* – espèce classée comme « Gravement menacée d'extinction » – à Msidunyi, Taita Hills, Kenya du sud (03°24'15"S 38°18'00"E). Son statut a été évalué en six périodes de travail sur le terrain (octobre 2011–mars 2014). Le site comptait sept territoires, situés dans un cordon de fourrés indigènes (45–50 ha) entourant un lambeau de forêt indigène (7,1 ha). Ainsi, Msidunyi pourrait contenir jusqu'à 15% de la population mondiale de *A. fuscicularis*. Les données collectées indiquent que l'espèce est nicheuse et que les territoires se trouvent principalement dans la bande de fourrés indigènes, plutôt que dans la forêt. Les plantations d'arbres exotiques sont fortement évitées, ce qui semble indiquer que la population locale de l'Apalis des Teitas augmenterait si ces plantations étaient supprimées. La capture d'individus a révélé que le sexe et l'âge peuvent être déterminés en se basant sur la couleur de l'iris et les caractéristiques du plumage. L'impact humain sur le site s'accroît, notamment par l'abattage sélectif des arbres indigènes et l'expansion de l'agriculture. Il apparaît donc que Msidunyi est un site clé, mais très menacé, pour l'Apalis des Teitas. Les interventions de gestion devraient se concentrer sur la suppression des plantations d'arbres exotiques afin d'accroître l'étendue de l'habitat favorable à l'espèce.

**Summary.** In October 2011, we discovered a new subpopulation of the Critically Endangered Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis*, in Msidunyi, Taita Hills, Kenya (03°24'15"S 38°18'00"E). We assessed its status during six field work periods (October 2011–March 2014). The site supported seven territories in a belt of indigenous thicket (45–50 ha) surrounding a patch of indigenous forest (7.1 ha). Msidunyi might therefore hold up to 15% of the global population of *A. fuscicularis*. Our data suggest that breeding occurs in the area and that territories are mainly located in the indigenous thicket belt, rather than in the forest. Plantations of exotic trees are strongly avoided, suggesting that removal of these plantations would probably result in an increase in the Taita Apalis population at the site. Based on mist-netting data, sex and age can be identified using iris colour and plumage features. We provide evidence of increasing human impact, namely selective logging of indigenous trees and agricultural expansion. Our results suggest that the site is a key, but highly threatened, stronghold for Taita Apalis. Management interventions should focus on removing exotic tree plantations to expand the area of suitable habitat for the species.

**T**aita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis* is a Critically Endangered species endemic to the Taita Hills in southern Kenya. Its global population was estimated at 310–654 individuals in 2001 (Borghesio *et al.* 2010). However, monitoring data suggest a strongly negative population trend in recent years (Borghesio *et al.* 2014), and the species may now number just 100–150 individuals (BirdLife International 2014a). The causes of the decline are not completely clear, but nest predation as well as human disturbance and habitat clearance at forest edges might all be implicated (BirdLife International 2014a). Action is urgently required to reverse this negative trend. In particular, the identification and protection of all remaining subpopulations is a priority.

In October 2011, we discovered a new subpopulation of *A. fuscicularis* in the Taita Hills, at a site known as Msidunyi (Borghesio & Wagura 2012). The small indigenous forest patch and the surrounding belt of indigenous thicket are highly threatened, as they are not protected and are surrounded by expanding agriculture. Preliminary observations suggested that Msidunyi might be a key site for Taita Apalis.

In this paper, we summarise the results of field work undertaken at Msidunyi between October 2011 and March 2014. The work aimed to estimate the size, distribution, habitat use, breeding and sex ratio of the local subpopulation of *A. fuscicularis*. Our results confirm the importance of the site as a stronghold for the



**Figure 1.** Map of the Taita Hills, showing the forest fragments where Taita Apalis *A. fuscigularis* is currently known to occur. The 1,400 m contour marks the transition between lowland and montane vegetation in the region.

Carte des Taita Hills, montrant les lambeaux de forêt où la présence de l'Apalis des Teitas *A. fuscigularis* a été attestée. La courbe de niveau de 1.400 m marque la transition entre la végétation de plaine et montagnarde.

species, as well as for other endemic and globally threatened taxa. We also document increasing human pressure and steady degradation at the site. This information will be important to inform management at Msidunyi and at other sites where the species occurs or might be reintroduced in the future.

### Study area

The Taita Hills are a small massif in southern Kenya, with an area of *c.*150 km<sup>2</sup> above the 1,400 m contour, which marks the transition between lowland and montane vegetation. The original vegetation was Afromontane forest, but deforestation has been rampant during recent decades: up to 98% of the original vegetation cover might have been lost (Newmark 1998),

with *c.*50% of that loss within the last 50 years (Pellikka *et al.* 2009). Currently, there is <500 ha of indigenous forest remaining, scattered over 11 fragments, six of which are smaller than 4 ha (BirdLife International 2014b). The Taita Hills are situated at the northernmost end of the Eastern Arc, one of the 34 most important biodiversity hotspots in the world, and boast several endemic biota, many of which are globally threatened. Two bird species are endemic to the area: Taita Apalis and Taita Thrush *Turdus belleri*, both of which are considered Critically Endangered (BirdLife International 2014a,b).

In October 2011, we visited a fragment of natural forest at a site called Msidunyi (Fig. 1), where we discovered the presence of Taita Apalis for the first time (Borghesio & Wagura





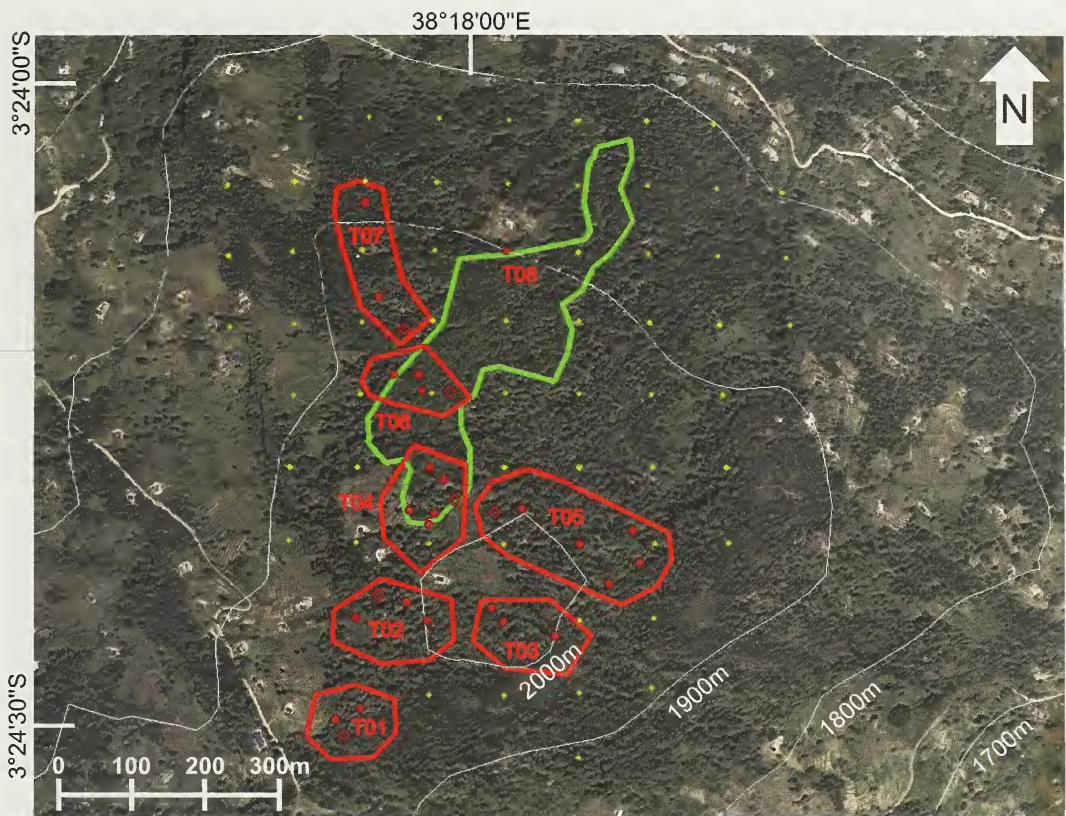
**Figure 2.** Views of Msidunyi. (a) the interior of the closed-canopy forest patch between T04 and T06, October 2011; (b) thicket belt at T03, with indigenous species (in the foreground), and a clump of Black Wattle *Acacia mearnsii* (left), an exotic tree species that has been planted in large numbers in the area; (c) maize field encroaching on the southern edge of the forest between T04 and T05, March 2014; (d) indigenous trees felled in the forest, October 2012 (Luca Borghesio)

Vues de Msidunyi. (a) l'intérieur du lambeau de forêt à canopée fermée entre T04 et T06, octobre 2011 ; (b) bande de fourrés à T03, avec des espèces indigènes (au premier plan), et un bosquet d'*Acacia mearnsii* (à gauche), un arbre exotique qui a été planté en grand nombre dans la zone ; (c) champ de maïs empiétant la limite méridionale de la forêt entre T04 et T05, mars 2014 ; (d) arbres indigènes abattus dans la forêt, octobre 2012 (Luca Borghesio)

2012). Based on our GPS measurements, the closed-canopy forest had an area of 7.1 ha with a canopy c.10–20 m high (Fig. 2a). The canopy layer is composed of trees such as *Strombosia scheffleri*, *Schefflera volkensii*, *Podocarpus* sp., *Xymalos monospora*, *Albizia gummifera*, *Syzygium micklethwaitii* and *Tabernaemontana stapfiana*. Mid-strata and lower layers are characterised

by abundant ferns, as well as *Euphorbia engleri*, *Dracaena steudneri*, *Turraea holstii*, *Pauridiantha paucinervis*, *Piper capense* and *Chassalia parvifolia*. The forest is surrounded by a belt of thicket vegetation (Fig. 2b) including exotic trees (*Acacia mearnsii*, *Eucalyptus* spp., *Cupressus lusitanica*) and a mixture of indigenous shrubs and trees, the remnants of a formerly much more extensive





**Figure 3.** Map of the Msidunyi study area, using a Google Earth (courtesy of Google Inc. All rights reserved © 2012 Digital Globe) aerial photograph dated February 2012. Narrow white lines = 100 m interval contours; the thick green line marks the indigenous forest patch. Red dots show the observations of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis* obtained during the study, red diamonds mark the position of mist-netting sites. Red lines delimit *A. fuscicularis* territories (see Table 3 for territory codes). Yellow dots show the grid of pre-set sample points, spaced at 100 m intervals, where standardised counts and habitat estimates were recorded.

Carte de la zone d'étude à Msidunyi, basée sur une photo aérienne de Google Earth datée de février 2012 (avec l'aimable autorisation de Google Inc. Tous droits réservés © 2012 Digital Globe). Lignes blanches étroites = courbes de niveau de 100 m ; la ligne verte délimite le lambeau de forêt indigène. Les points rouges indiquent les observations de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscicularis* réalisées pendant l'étude ; les losanges rouges la position des sites de capture au filet japonais. Les lignes rouges délimitent les territoires de *A. fuscicularis* (voir Tableau 3 pour les codes des territoires). Les points jaunes représentent les points d'échantillonnage préétablis, espacés de 100 m, où des comptages standardisés et des estimations de l'habitat ont été réalisés.

forest that is confirmed by aerial photographs from the early 1960s (Beentje 1988). The thicket belt has an area of c.45–50 ha (Fig. 3), at altitudes of 1,800–2,020 m.

## Methods

We assessed the status of *A. fuscicularis* in the study area during six field work periods (October 2011 to March 2014). We used a combination of different survey techniques, including standardised point counts, opportunistic observations, and

mist-netting, with and without playback of *A. fuscicularis* vocalisations (Table 1).

A pre-set grid of regularly spaced sample points (100 m distance) was created using a GIS (Fig. 3). The grid comprised 65 points covering the entire area of Msidunyi forest, plus the thicket belt surrounding it. At each point, within 25 m-radius plots, we visually estimated the extent of four habitat types: closed-canopy indigenous forest, indigenous thicket, exotic plantation and agriculture. Then, using one-way ANOVA, we



**Table 1.** Summary of field work in Msidunyi between October 2011 and March 2014. The table lists type of sample (opportunistic observations, standardised counts or mist-netting), whether playback was used, number of points visited, no. of detections of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis* (no. of individuals in parentheses), and frequency of detection (number of detections / number of points).

**Tableau 1.** Aperçu du travail de terrain à Msidunyi entre octobre 2011 et mars 2014. Le tableau énumère le type d'échantillon (observations opportunistes, comptages standardisés ou captures au filet japonais), l'utilisation ou non de repasses, le nombre de points visités, le nombre de détections de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscicularis* (nombre d'individus entre parenthèses), et la fréquence de détection (nombre de détections / nombre de points).

Visit	Type of sample	Playback	No. of points	No. of detections	Frequency of detection
2–4 Oct 2011	Opportunistic observations	Yes	19	9 (17)	0.47
5–8 Dec 2011	Standardised counts	No	68	6 (11)	0.088
15 Oct 2012	Opportunistic observations	Yes	15	4 (7)	0.27
15–19 Feb 2013	Standardised counts	No	57	2 (4)	0.035
18–21 Apr 2013	Standardised counts	Yes	60	3 (6)	0.05
16–20 Mar 2014	Mist-netting	Yes	6	6 (13)	1.00

compared the plots where *A. fuscicularis* was absent with those where it was observed at least once during the survey. Percentages were arcsin-square root transformed to achieve data normality (Zar 1999).

Standardised bird counts were made at the nodes of the grid. In December 2011 and February 2013 we performed ten-minute point counts without playback. In April 2013 we performed six-minute counts with playback (one minute of playback, followed by two minutes listening, repeated twice at each point). Counts were always performed by two observers. Recordings of *A. fuscicularis* were provided by the Wildlife Sounds section of the British Library. Calls were broadcast using an Altec Lansing im237 loudspeaker, connected to a Sandisk mp3 player. To map observations with high accuracy, for each group of *A. fuscicularis*, we recorded distance using a tape measure and compass direction from the observers to the birds; this was not done while playback was being performed, as the birds moved in response to it.

Opportunistic observations were collected in October 2011 and 2012. During these observations, we played *A. fuscicularis* vocalisations, but did not record data at nodes of the pre-set grid. In order to minimise disturbance to the birds, recordings were never played for more than five minutes at the same site.

Playback of recorded calls permitted us to collect information on the sex ratio of the *A. fuscicularis* population. In birds, skewed sex ratios are often observed in declining populations (Donald 2007), including for Taita Thrush, the

other Critically Endangered bird endemic to Taita (Lens *et al.* 1998). Thus, we use sex ratio as an initial surrogate of population health. *A. fuscicularis*, like other species within the Bar-throated Apalis *A. thoracica* group (Dowsett-Lemaire 2010), responds quickly to playback of its song, and, as we describe in the Results, the two sexes can be distinguished using calls, behaviour and plumage patterns.

In March 2014, we performed one session of mist-netting at Msidunyi as well as in three other Taita forest fragments (Ngangao, Yale and Vuria). Birds were attracted using pre-recorded vocalisations, and captured in 12 × 2.5 m, 16-mm mesh nets. Each bird was ringed with National Museums of Kenya metal and coloured plastic rings to permit subsequent individual identification. For each captured bird, we recorded biometrics, assessed moult state and took photographs to permit comparison of plumage patterns.

## Results

### Sexing and ageing

As few data are available in the literature concerning ageing and sexing *A. fuscicularis*, we first describe how to distinguish males versus females and adults versus immatures. The following information is not restricted to Msidunyi, as it was obtained over the entire range of *A. fuscicularis*.

Playback of recorded vocalisations elicits rapid responses by pairs. Birds attracted using playback show clear differences in morphology, voice and behaviour. Two plumage types occur: the first has a darker head, throat and upper breast,



**Figure 4.** Ageing and sexing of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis*: (a) adult male and (b) adult female, Ngangao forest fragment, 1 October 2011; these two individuals duetted in response to playback of pre-recorded songs, suggesting they were members of the same pair; (c) adult male and (d) adult female, captured in the same net (T05) in Msidunyi, 16 March 2014; (e) immature, Vuria, 13 March 2014, showing the greyish iris, and yellowish gape, which was not evident in all of the immatures that we examined (Luca Borghesio)

Détermination de l'âge et du sexe de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscicularis* : (a) mâle adulte et (b) femelle adulte, lambeau de forêt de Ngangao, 1er octobre 2011 ; les deux individus chantaient en duo en réponse à la repasse de chants enregistrés préalablement, ce qui suggère qu'ils formaient un couple ; (c) mâle adulte et (d) femelle adulte, capturés dans le même filet japonais (T05) à Msidunyi, 16 mars 2014 ; (e) immature, Vuria, 13 mars 2014, montrant un iris grisâtre et des commissures jaunâtres ; ces dernières n'étaient pas apparentes chez tous les immatures examinés (Luca Borghesio)

**Table 2.** Molt, iris colour, plumage characteristics and biometrics of individuals of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscicularis* mist-netted in March 2014. For wing length, sample size is six adult males and no adult females, as most females were moulting their wing feathers. For tarsus and mass, sample size corresponds to the total number of individuals.

**Tableau 2.** Mue, couleur de l'iris, caractéristiques du plumage et mensurations des Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscicularis* capturées dans les filets japonais en mars 2014. Pour la longueur de l'aile, l'échantillon est de six mâles adultes et zéro femelles adultes, car la plupart des femelles étaient en train de muer les primaires. Pour le tarse et le poids, l'échantillon correspond au nombre total d'individus.

	Adult males	Adult females	Immatures
Total no.	17	5	7
Plumage	Dark	Pale	Pale
Iris	Cream-white	Cream-white	Grey
Active moult	16	5	1
No moult	1	0	6
Wing (± SD)	53.2 ± 0.8 (n = 6)	No data	53.1 ± 0.7
Tarsus (± SD)	20.9 ± 0.6	20.8 ± 0.5	20.7 ± 0.6
Mass (± SD)	12.0 ± 0.6	11.4 ± 0.1	11.5 ± 0.3



while the second has brown-grey tones on the head, and a paler grey throat and upper breast (Fig. 4a–b). The vocal reaction of dark birds to pre-recorded calls was swifter than that of the pale ones: in 19 playback replicates undertaken in three distinct forest fragments (Ngangao, Msidunyi and Fururu), dark birds responded before pale ones 11 times, in seven cases the vocal response of the two birds of the two plumage types was contemporaneous, while only once did a pale bird respond to pre-recorded calls faster than a dark one (Chi-squared test,  $p = 0.018$ ). Vocal behaviour also differs between dark and paler birds. Birds of the two plumage types usually duet, with darker birds uttering a stronger *tcchep-tcchep-tcchep...* and paler ones responding with a softer *ti-ti-ti...* This corresponds to the description of the vocalisations of *A. thoracica* in Érard *et al.* (1997).

During mist-netting, we captured 29 individuals of *A. fuscigularis* (Ngangao  $n = 9$ , Vuria  $n = 11$ , Msidunyi  $n = 8$ , Yale  $n = 1$ ). In the hand, besides the dark or pale plumage described above, birds differed in moult state and iris colour (Table 2, Fig. 4c–e). In summary, all of the darker birds had a cream-white iris and were almost all in heavy moult, whereas paler birds either had a cream-white iris and were in moult, or had a grey iris and no moult. No significant difference was found in body size (weight, tarsus, wing length) between these groups (one-way ANOVA, all comparisons  $p > 0.05$ ), but the sample size should be increased in order to perform more powerful statistical tests.

We interpret the above results as follows: darker individuals were adult males, paler ones with cream-white irides adult females, while those with grey irides were immatures of both sexes. Heavily moulting adults in March suggest that this is the post-breeding period, which accords with the available nesting records of the species (Wagura *et al.* 2012).

*Population assessment and habitat use*

We performed 125 standardised counts without playback and 60 with playback. The counts yielded 11 detections of 21 individuals, while opportunistic observations produced another 13 detections of 24 individuals (Table 1). At the time when counts were performed, birds were not individually recognisable as no ringing had occurred. Therefore, it is probable that some of the above detections represent multiple records of the same individuals. Frequencies of detection of *A. fuscigularis* were higher in October–December and lower in February and April (Table 1). As these two periods correspond to the early and late nesting season, respectively (Wagura *et al.* 2012), variation in detection frequency might be related to the breeding cycle.

Sites where *A. fuscigularis* was observed were not restricted to closed-canopy forest (Fig. 3), but were widespread in that part of study area without exotic tree plantations. Furthermore, sites where *A. fuscigularis* was observed possessed significantly more forest and indigenous thicket, but fewer exotic trees than sites where the species was not seen (Table 4).

**Table 3.** Summary of observations of Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscigularis* in the territories identified in Msidunyi. The table shows whether males (M), females (F) or immatures (I) were observed. T08 was occupied by a single individual (probably an immature) in April 2013, therefore we do not consider it as a permanent territory.

**Tableau 3.** Aperçu des observations de l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscigularis* dans les territoires identifiés à Msidunyi. Le tableau indique s'il s'agissait de mâles (M), de femelles (F) ou d'immatures (I). T08 était occupé par un seul individu (probablement un immature) en avril 2013 ; pour cela nous ne le considérons pas comme un territoire permanent.

Territories	Oct 2011	Dec 2011	Oct 2012	Feb 2013	Apr 2013	Mar 2014
T01	M+F			M+F		M+F
T02	M+F		M		M+F	M+F
T03	M+F	M	M+F			
T04	M+F	M+F	M+F		M+F+I	M+F+I
T05	M+F	M+F	M+F	M+F		M+F
T06	M+F	M+F				M+F+I
T07		M+F				M+F+I
T08					I?	

**Table 4.** Habitat composition of 25-m radius plots centred on the 65 grid sample points; numbers are mean plus or minus standard error. Differences between plots where Taita Apalis *Apalis fuscularis* was observed or not were tested using one-way ANOVA.

**Tableau 4.** Composition de l'habitat des parcelles d'un rayon de 25 m des 65 points d'échantillonnage de la grille ; les nombres indiquent des moyennes plus ou moins une erreur standard. Les différences entre les parcelles où l'Apalis des Teitas *Apalis fuscularis* a été observée ou non ont été testées en appliquant une ANOVA simple.

Habitat type	Apalis absent	Apalis present	ANOVA
Forest	16.5 ± 4.6%	39.8 ± 8.1%	$F_{1,63} = 11.2; P = 0.0014$
Thicket	5.8 ± 1.9%	25.1 ± 6.9%	$F_{1,63} = 11.3; P = 0.0013$
Exotic plantation	61.3 ± 6.1%	30.2 ± 9.2%	$F_{1,63} = 6.6; P = 0.011$
Agriculture	16.4 ± 4.4%	4.9 ± 3.2%	$F_{1,63} = 1.9; P = 0.17$
Sample size	48	17	—

The March 2014 mist-netting session identified the location of *A. fuscularis* pairs in the area. The lowest part of the study area (1,790–1,890 m), in the north and east, is not occupied by *A. fuscularis*. This area (c.30% of the study site) is mostly occupied by exotic trees. Elevation of *A. fuscularis* records ranged from 1,890 to 2,010 m, and clustered into seven territories (Fig. 3), where pairs were observed multiple times between October 2011 and March 2014 (Table 3). This suggests that the territories were occupied by stable pairs, but long-term mark-observation studies would be needed to confirm this hypothesis.

**Breeding and sex ratio**

Playback during standardised counts, opportunistic observations and mist-netting produced 22 records of *A. fuscularis*. Of these, 19 were pairs and three involved single adult males. Based on these data, sex ratio was 0.93 females to one male. This ratio does not differ from unity (Chi-squared test,  $p$  = not significant). Immatures were observed four times over two successive years during our survey (Table 3). This confirms that breeding occurs regularly in Msidunyi.

**Additional observations**

Other species of interest observed during our field work included the endemic Taita White-eye *Zosterops (poliogastrus) silvanus* and the endemic butterflies *Cymothoe teita* and *Papilio desmondi teita*. Among plants, the trees *Dasylepis integra* (Eastern Arc endemic; IUCN: Vulnerable) and *Prunus africana* (Vulnerable) were found in the forest and in the shrub belt surrounding it. One *Psychotria* sp. shrub might prove to be the undescribed 'Psychotria species B' listed by Beentje

*et al.* (1994) and feared extinct as it has not been found at Taita for decades. We also found the shrub *Psychotria petiti* and the forb *Impatiens teitensis* ssp. *teitensis*—both of which are Taita endemics.

At the time of our first visit, the Msidunyi forest fragment was remarkably intact, with few signs of human activity. By March 2014, however, human disturbance, logging and agriculture had increased dramatically (Figs. 2c–d).

**Discussion**

This study confirms that Msidunyi is a key site for Taita Apalis, with several other endemic and/or globally threatened species also present. At least seven territorial pairs of *A. fuscularis* occur in the area, or 3.3–6.7% of the species' estimated global population as of 2001 (Borghesio *et al.* 2010), but up to 15% if, as long-term monitoring suggests, a major decline in numbers has occurred recently (Borghesio *et al.* 2014). The presence of *A. fuscularis* in Msidunyi is stable, as we observed territorial pairs occupying the same territories on six subsequent visits over a period of almost three years. Moreover, breeding occurred in the area and the sex ratio was almost equal to unity during the survey.

In terms of indigenous forest area, Msidunyi is relatively small compared to the three largest forest fragments in the Taita Hills, namely Mbololo (220 ha), Ngangao (120 ha) and Chawia (86 ha) (Pellikka *et al.* 2009, BirdLife International 2014b). However, numbers of *A. fuscularis* in these other fragments are either very small (<5 pairs in Mbololo and Chawia) or rapidly declining (>60% decrease in Ngangao since 2001: Borghesio *et al.* 2014). In terms of conservation, Msidunyi appears to support either the second-



or third-most important subpopulation of the species, after Ngangao, where a rapid decline questions its long-term persistence, and Vuria, which is spatially close (1.5 km) and probably biologically connected to Msidunyi.

The distribution of *A. fuscicularis* in Msidunyi was not homogeneous. Localities at lower elevations (<1,890 m) were apparently unoccupied. However, elsewhere in the Taita Hills (Chawia forest), *A. fuscicularis* occurs at altitudes as low as 1,500 m. Thus, the absence of *A. fuscicularis* at lower elevations in Msidunyi is probably explained by the abundant presence of exotic tree plantations, which are strongly avoided by the species.

Interestingly, most observations of *A. fuscicularis* were obtained outside or at the edge of the patch of indigenous closed-canopy forest. This confirms that it favours relatively open vegetation, such as forest edges or canopy gaps, and avoids dense closed-canopy forest. In another study, we also found that nest sites appear to be located in canopy gaps within Ngangao Forest (Wagura *et al.* 2012). These results suggest that conservation action in Msidunyi needs to focus on an area extending beyond the patch of indigenous forest, including the thicket belt, from c.1,800 m and above. This area covers >50 ha. At the same time, the species' strong avoidance of exotic trees suggests that interventions aimed at removing exotics and restoring indigenous vegetation will certainly benefit Taita Apalis. Removal of exotic trees might not only be a relatively simple and cheap habitat restoration intervention in Msidunyi, but could also be implemented in all of the Taita Hills forest fragments, because exotic plantations are widespread in the area (Pellikka *et al.* 2009, 2013).

Besides confirming the biological importance of Msidunyi, our field work demonstrates the extreme urgency of acting to prevent the destruction of this tiny remnant forest and other habitats with indigenous vegetation in the area. During the short duration of our field work, we observed widespread damage caused by selective logging of indigenous trees. Simultaneously, cultivated areas markedly expanded in the years during our survey, suggesting that most natural habitats may soon be replaced by agriculture, unless urgent action is taken.

This work provides baseline biological knowledge crucial to inform action to counter the rapid decline of *A. fuscicularis* within its small range. However, more detailed biological data are needed to organise targeted actions and gather the support of local communities, as well as governmental organisations and NGOs, with respect to the current status of the species and the global importance of Msidunyi for its conservation.

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# Bird observations in Muktar Mountain Forest, eastern Ethiopia: a previously unidentified Important Bird Area

Addisu Asefa

**Observations ornithologiques dans la forêt du Mont Muktar, Éthiopie orientale : une Zone d'Intérêt pour la Conservation des Oiseaux auparavant non identifiée.** Des observations ornithologiques ont été réalisées dans la forêt du Mont Muktar, Éthiopie orientale, entre le 13 décembre 2013 et le 2 janvier 2014. En 21 jours de travaux sur le terrain, 81 espèces ont été recensées, dont six espèces d'intérêt pour la conservation, 25 espèces confinées au biome des zones afromontagnardes, deux endémiques éthiopiennes et dix quasi endémiques. Des extensions de l'aire de distribution de plusieurs espèces ont été notées. L'inventaire indique que le site remplit les conditions d'une Zone d'Intérêt pour la Conservation des Oiseaux.

**Summary.** The results of bird observations made in Muktar Mountain Forest, eastern Ethiopia, between 13 December 2013 and 2 January 2014, are presented. In 21 days of field work, 81 species were recorded, including six species of global conservation concern, 25 Afrotropical highlands biome-restricted species, and two Ethiopian endemics and ten near-endemics. Range extensions were noted for several species. The survey strongly suggests that the site qualifies as a highland biome Important Bird Area.

Ethiopia harbours c.837 bird species, of which 17–18 are endemic to the country (Ash & Atkins 2009). To date, 69 Important Bird Areas (IBAs) have been identified (EWNHS 2001). However, ornithological data for many IBAs are inadequate and some regions remain unexplored (EWNHS 2001, Asefa & Kinahan 2014). In view of the speed with which wildlife habitats are being destroyed, the need for ornithological surveys of poorly known IBAs and previously overlooked potential sites is a matter of urgency (Yalden & Largen 1992, EWNHS 2001).

Here I report bird species recorded in and around Muktar Mountain Forest, eastern Ethiopia, during field work undertaken between 13 December 2013 and 2 January 2014. The objective was to provide a species list and information on the ornithological significance of this poorly known forest.

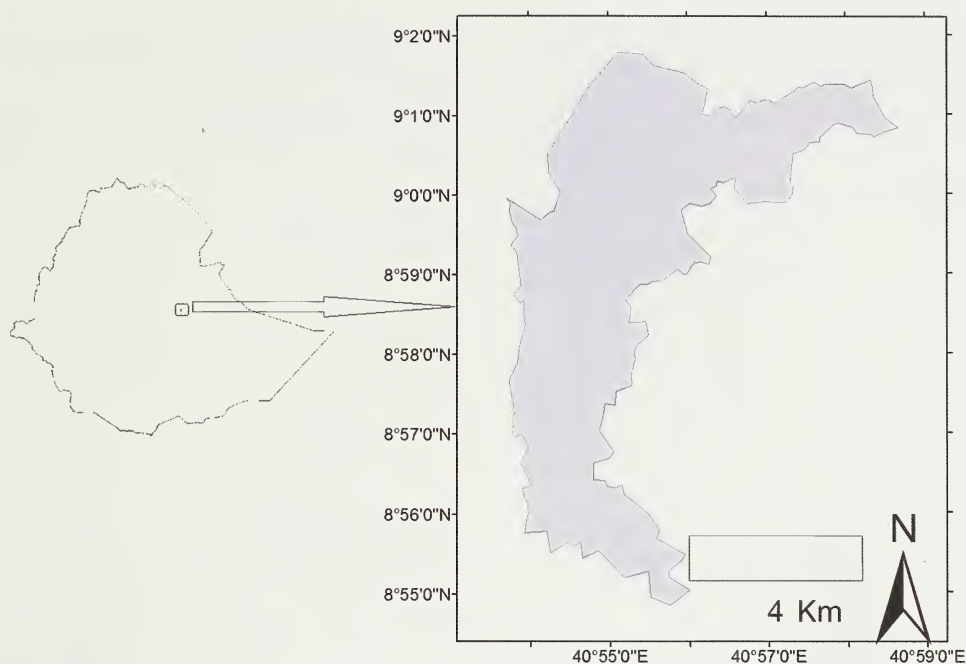
## Study area

Muktar Mountain is in the south-eastern Ethiopian highlands, c.350 km east of Addis Ababa and 25 km east of the nearest town, Chiro (formerly Asebe Teferi) at 08°54'00"–09°02'00"N 40°54'00"–40°59'00"E (Fig. 1; squares 60d and 71b in Ash & Atkins 2009). The forest covers c.3,600 ha and lies at 2,000–3,010 m altitude (Mohammad & Ayana 2012). The wet season usually lasts five months (June–October) and annual rainfall is 600–1,200 mm (Mohammad &

Ayana 2012). The mountain is part of the Wabe–Shebelle river watershed, with at least 40 tributary springs and rivers (Mohammad & Ayana 2012).

Vegetation is dry evergreen montane forest, characterised by *Juniperus procera* and *Podocarpus falcatus* trees at lower elevations, and *Hypericum revolutum*, *Dombeya torrida* and *Nuxia congesta* near the summit (Asefa *et al.* 2014). Patches of open grassland and marshy habitats occur throughout the forest. The vegetation in the immediate environs of the mountain is quite different, especially on the eastern side, where it is characterised by typical lowland species such as *Acacia* spp.

Muktar Mountain Forest hosts considerable populations of the Ethiopian endemic Mountain Nyala *Tragelaphus buxtoni* and the endemic subspecies *menelickii* of Bushbuck *T. scriptus* (Argaw *et al.* 2002, Evangelista *et al.* 2008, Asefa *et al.* 2014). The forest, and adjacent Kuni Mountain (c.5 km west), was designated as the Kuni–Muktar Nyala Sanctuary by the Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Organization in 1989 (Argaw *et al.* 2002, Evangelista *et al.* 2008). However, due to civil unrest following the fall of the Ethiopian government in 1991, no significant conservation efforts were made and part of the forest was converted to cultivation by local villagers. However, as the region was affected by recurrent drought, the area was not productive and the human population relocated to other parts



**Figure 1.** Map of Muktar Mountain Forest and its location within Ethiopia.

Carte de la forêt du Mont Muktar et sa situation en Éthiopie.

of the country in the early 2000s (Evangelista *et al.* 2008). Subsequently, re-demarcation of the boundary was undertaken by the Oromia Forestry and Wildlife Department. Management of the forest currently falls under the auspices of the Oromia Regional Forest and Wildlife Enterprise (Mohammad & Ayana 2012).

Although the forest is at present free of settlements, encroachment is a major potential threat and mainly occurs on flat and gently sloping areas all around its boundaries, but is steadily moving upslope (Asefa *et al.* 2014). Tree-cutting for construction and fuel was also frequently witnessed during the field work. Livestock grazing in the forest is relatively infrequent, although grass harvesting for cattle is common. The latter practice is thought to be advantageous to wildlife as it decreases disturbance caused by livestock (Evangelista *et al.* 2008, Asefa *et al.* 2014).

## Methods

Birds were recorded along four 4–5 km (mean = *c.*4.5 km) parallel line transects, systematically selected to sample all major habitats along altitudinal gradients. Transects were 200–250 m apart and were visited on different days. All bird

species seen or heard were recorded as present, irrespective of their distance from transects. As the primary objective of the study was to record the species present in the area, quantitative data, such as the number of individuals or the frequency of occurrence along each transect, were not collected. Birds were identified using binoculars and a field guide (Redman *et al.* 2009). Each transect was visited twice; thus, *c.*36 km were covered. The surveys were conducted early in the morning, 06.30–09.30 hrs, and in late afternoon, 15.00–17.30 hrs. In addition, birds observed opportunistically in the forest and surrounding agricultural areas were also noted.

As a broad guide to a species' local abundance, relative frequency of occurrence was calculated using a simple formula:  $(T_i/T_n) \times 100$ ; where,  $T_i$  = number of transects along which a species was recorded, and  $T_n$  = the total number of transects surveyed. Species were then classified as common (observed along at least six, or 75%, of eight transects), frequent (observed on 50–74% of transects), uncommon (25–49%) or rare (<25%). Relative frequency of seven species recorded outside the survey period was estimated subjectively based on their frequency during the



21 days of field work. Thus, a species recorded on at least 16 (75%) days was classified as common, on 11–15 (50–74%) days as frequent, etc. Species were also assigned to one of four major habitats (cf. Redman *et al.* 2009): (1) open-habitat species (i.e. principally occurring in cultivation and grassland), (2) shrubland species (shrubby areas and forest edge), (3) woodland species (wooded savanna and farmland with scattered trees), and (4) forest species (dense woodland and closed forest).

## Results

In total, 81 bird species belonging to 36 families were observed; these are listed in Appendix 1, with their relative frequency, status, biome affinities and broad habitat requirements.

Six of the 31 species of conservation concern known from Ethiopia (BirdLife International 2014) were observed, including four that are Endangered (Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus*, Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*, White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis* and White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*), one Vulnerable (Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*) and one Near Threatened (Rouget's Rail *Rougetius rougetii*). Twenty-five of the 49 species of the Afrotropical highlands biome-restricted species in Ethiopia (EWNHS 2001) were recorded, as well as eight migratory species (Dowsett *et al.* 2014). Two Ethiopian endemics—Yellow-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus flavifrons* and Abyssinian Catbird *Parophasma galinieri*—and ten near-endemics (nine shared with Eritrea, and one, Chestnut-naped Francolin *Francolinus castaneicollis*, with Somalia: Redman *et al.* 2009) were found. Approximately half of the species were classified as predominantly forest-specialist (26 species, c.32%) and woodland species (14, c.17%), whilst the remainder constituted open-habitat (29 species, or 36%) and shrubland species (12 species, 15%). Thirty-five (or 43%) were estimated to be common to frequent; rarely observed species (those with only one or two records) represented c.27% of the total.

The present records extend the known distribution of several species (Ash & Atkins 2009), including extensions to the east of the central Rift Valley for some that are known from adjacent areas west of the Rift (e.g. Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk *Accipiter rufiventris*, Long-legged Buzzard *Buteo rufinus*, Rouget's

Rail *Rougetius rougetii*, Tambourine Dove *Turtur tympanistria*, Yellow-fronted Parrot *Poicephalus flavifrons*, Yellow Bishop *Euplectes capensis* and Abyssinian Crimsonwing *Cryptospiza salvadorii*). Details for two out-of-range species are as follows.

**D'Arnaud's Barbet** *Trachyphonus darnaudii*.—A pair was observed foraging in a low bush (c.3 m tall) in farmland c.2 km west of the forest. They had olive-green upperparts spotted with white, a pale yellow neck, face, chin and breast spotted with black, a pinkish bill, and a rufous vent. The two birds differed in the colour of the crown, black in one and yellowish with black streaks in the other. This is the species' northernmost record.

**Somali Starling** *Onychognathus blythii*.—Pairs were observed at close range twice adjacent to the forest, once perched on branches of a dead tree in farmland and the other time in flight. They were identified by their strongly graduated tails and the female's whitish head (female Red-winged *Onychognathus morio* and Slender-billed Starlings *O. tenuirostris* have the head grey, and Red-winged's tail is not particularly graduated: Redman *et al.* 2009).

## Discussion

Given the short study period and the fact that it encompassed only the dry season, this report undoubtedly under-estimates the number of species that occur. Similarly, estimations of relative frequencies should be viewed only as an approximation. This is particularly true as the study did not record the number of individuals or the frequency of observation of each species along each transect, which could have been used to derive abundance estimations. Despite such limitations, the study revealed that Muktar Mountain Forest can be considered an IBA on the basis of the presence of a significant number of globally threatened and highlands biome-restricted species.

The most serious threats to the forest are the expansion of settlements and agriculture around its borders, and tree cutting for fuel and construction purposes (Asefa *et al.* 2014). Therefore, conservation initiatives to mitigate these threats should be developed.

In addition to its ornithological significance, the forest is one of only three remaining sites in the south-eastern Ethiopian highlands where

Mountain Nyala occurs (the others being the Arsi and Bale Mountains). Habitat modification due to expanding human settlements, cultivation, livestock grazing and illegal poaching are major threats to the survival of the species, which has an estimated total population of c.3,500–4,000 individuals and is currently classified as Endangered (Evangelista *et al.* 2008, IUCN 2013). Furthermore, forest provides ecosystem services to the surrounding local community. Indeed, the large number of springs and streams emanating from the mountain are the only perennial water source for >1 million people and their livestock. Most of these streams are used for traditional irrigation (Mohammad & Ayana 2012, Asefa *et al.* 2014). Given the region's propensity to drought and in the face of alarming environmental changes occurring in the Ethiopian highlands (CSE 1997, EWNHS 2001), the future livelihoods of these people will rely solely on the persistence of proper ecological processes in this forest.

In conclusion, although small in size, the biological and ecological values of Muktar Mountain Forest are considerable. As such, in addition to considering designating it as an IBA, legal status as a formally protected area has been suggested (Asefa *et al.* 2012).

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**Appendix 1.** Bird species recorded in Muktar Mountain Forest, eastern Ethiopia, 13 December 2013–2 January 2014.

Sequence and taxonomy follow Dowsett *et al.* (2014).

**Relative frequency:** c = common; f = frequent; u = uncommon; r = rare.

**Status** (Redman *et al.* 2009, Dowsett *et al.* 2014): R = Resident; PM = Palearctic migrant; E = Endemic; NE = Near endemic.

**IUCN Red List category** (BirdLife International 2014): EN = Endangered; VU = Vulnerable; NT = Near Threatened.

**Biome:** AH = Restricted to the Afrotropical highlands biome (EWNHS 2001).

**Habitat:** FR = forest; WL = woodland; SHL = shrubland; OH = open habitat.

\* Species recorded outside the transect surveys.

**Annexe 1.** Espèces d'oiseaux recensées dans la forêt du Mont Muktar, Éthiopie orientale, entre le 13 décembre 2013 et le 2 janvier 2014.

L'ordre et la taxonomie suivent Dowsett *et al.* (2014).

**Fréquence relative :** c = commun ; f = fréquent ; u = peu commun ; r = rare.

**Statut** (Redman *et al.* 2009, Dowsett *et al.* 2014) : R = Résident ; PM = Migrateur paléarctique ; E = Endémique ; NE = Quasi endémique.

**Catégorie de la Liste Rouge UICN** (BirdLife International 2014) : EN = Menacé d'extinction ; VU = Vulnérable ; NT = Quasi menacé.

**Biome :** AH = Confiné au biome des zones afromontagnardes (EWNHS 2001).

**Habitat :** FR = forêt dense ; WL = forêt claire ; SHL = formation arbustive ; OH = milieu ouvert.

\* Espèce enregistrée en dehors des inventaires des transects.

English name	Scientific name	Relative frequency	Status	IUCN	Biome	Habitat
<b>THRESKIORNITHIDAE</b>						
Wattled Ibis	<i>Bostrychia carunculata</i>	f	R, NE		AH	OH
*Sacred Ibis	<i>Threskiornis aethiopicus</i>	r	R			OH
<b>ACCIPITRIDAE</b>						
Black Kite	<i>Milvus migrans</i>	u	R			OH
Bearded Vulture	<i>Gypaetus barbatus</i>	r	R			OH
Egyptian Vulture	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	r	R	EN		OH
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	f	R	EN		OH
White-backed Vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>	c	R	EN		WL
White-headed Vulture	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	u	R	EN		WL
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	u	PM			WL
*Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	r	R	VU		OH
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	r	PM			OH
African Goshawk	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>	u	R			FR
Little Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter minullus</i>	u	R			FR
Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter rufigentris</i>	u	R			FR
Long-legged Buzzard	<i>Buteo rufinus</i>	r	PM			OH
Augur Buzzard	<i>Buteo augur</i>	c	R			OH
Tawny Eagle	<i>Aquila rapax</i>	f	R			OH
Verreaux's Eagle	<i>Aquila verreauxii</i>	r	R			OH
<b>PHASIANIDAE</b>						
Chestnut-naped Francolin	<i>Francolinus castaneicollis</i>	f	R, NE		AH	SHL
<b>RALLIDAE</b>						
Rouget's Rail	<i>Rougetius rougetii</i>	r	R, NE	NT	AH	SHL
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>						
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	r	R			FR
African Olive Pigeon	<i>Columba arquatrix</i>	u	R			FR
*Speckled Pigeon	<i>Columba guinea</i>	u	R			OH
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	c	R			FR
Dusky Turtle Dove	<i>Streptopelia lugens</i>	c	R		AH	WL
<b>PSITTACIDAE</b>						
Yellow-fronted Parrot	<i>Poicephalus flavifrons</i>	u	R, E			FR
Black-winged Lovebird	<i>Agapornis taranta</i>	r	R, NE		AH	FR
<b>MUSOPHAGIDAE</b>						
White-cheeked Turaco	<i>Tauraco leucotis</i>	u	R, NE		AH	FR
<b>CAPRIMULGIDAE</b>						
Abyssinian Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus poliocephalus</i>	r	R		AH	WL
<b>COLIIDAE</b>						
Speckled Mousebird	<i>Colius striatus</i>	u	R			FR

English name	Scientific name	Relative frequency	Status	IUCN	Biome	Habitat
<b>UPUPIDAE</b>						
Hoopoe	<i>Upupa epops</i>	u	PM			WL
<b>BUCEROTIDAE</b>						
Hemprich's Hornbill	<i>Tockus hemprichii</i>	r	R			WL
<b>CAPITONIDAE</b>						
Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus chrysoconus</i>	r	R			FR
D'Arnaud's Barbet	<i>Trachyphonus darnaudii</i>	r	R			WL
<b>PICIDAE</b>						
Red-throated Wryneck	<i>Jynx ruficollis</i>	r	R			WL
Abyssinian Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicus abyssinicus</i>	f	R, NE		AH	FR
<b>ALAUDIDAE</b>						
Thekla Lark	<i>Galerida theklae</i>	u	R			OH
<b>HIRUNDINIDAE</b>						
Plain Martin	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>	f	R			OH
<b>MOTACILLIDAE</b>						
*Red-throated Pipit	<i>Anthus cervinus</i>	u	PM			OH
<b>PYCNONOTIDAE</b>						
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	c	R			FR
<b>TURDIDAE</b>						
Rüppell's Robin Chat	<i>Cossypha semirufa</i>	c	R		AH	FR
Moorland Chat	<i>Cercomela sordida</i>	f	R		AH	OH
White-winged Cliff Chat	<i>Thamnodaea semirufa</i>	r	R, NE		AH	OH
Pied Wheatear	<i>Oenanthe pleschanka</i>	r	PM			OH
Common Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	u	PM			OH
Groundscraper Thrush	<i>Psophocichla litsitsirupa</i>	f	R			OH
Olive Thrush	<i>Turdus olivaceus</i>	c	R			FR
<b>SYLVIDAE</b>						
Cinnamon Bracken Warbler	<i>Bradypterus cinnamomeus</i>	c	R			SHL
Common Chiffchaff	<i>Phylloscopus collybita</i>	c	PM			FR
Brown Woodland Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus umbrovirens</i>	c	R		AH	FR
<b>CISTICOLIDAE</b>						
Winding Cisticola	<i>Cisticola galactotes</i>	f	R			SHL
Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	c	R			SHL
<b>MUSCICAPIDAE</b>						
Abyssinian Slaty Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis chocolatinus</i>	c	R, NE			FR
African Dusky Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>	f	R			FR
<b>MONARCHIDAE</b>						
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	u	R			FR
<b>TIMALIIDAE</b>						
White-rumped Babbler	<i>Turdoides leucopygia</i>	c	R			WL
Abyssinian Catbird	<i>Parophasma galinieri</i>	c	R, E		AH	FR
<b>PARIDAE</b>						
White-backed Black Tit	<i>Parus leuconotus</i>	c	R, NE		AH	FR
<b>NECTARINIIDAE</b>						
Tacazze Sunbird	<i>Nectarinia tacazze</i>	c	R		AH	WL
<b>ZOSTEROPIDAE</b>						
Montane White-eye	<i>Zosterops polioastrus</i>	f	R		AH	FR
<b>LANIIDAE</b>						
Common Fiscal	<i>Lanius collaris</i>	u	R		AH	WL
<b>MALACONOTIDAE</b>						
Tropical Boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>	c	R			FR
<b>ORIOOLIDAE</b>						
Abyssinian Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus monacha</i>	f	R, NE		AH	FR



English name	Scientific name	Relative frequency	Status	IUCN	Biome	Habitat
<b>CORVIDAE</b>						
*Cape Crow	<i>Corvus capensis</i>	u	R			OH
*Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>	u	R			OH
Fan-tailed Raven	<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>	u	R			OH
Thick-billed Raven	<i>Corvus crassirostris</i>	f	R, NE		AH	OH
<b>STURNIDAE</b>						
Somali Starling	<i>Onychognathus blythii</i>	r	R			OH
<b>BUPHAGIDAE</b>						
*Red-billed Oxpecker	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>	u	R			OH
<b>PASSERIDAE</b>						
Swainson's Sparrow	<i>Passer swainsonii</i>	f	R		AH	WL
<b>PLOCEIDAE</b>						
Baglafecht Weaver	<i>Ploceus baglafecht</i>	f	R		AH	SHL
Yellow Bishop	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>	u	R			SHL
<b>ESTRILIDIDAE</b>						
Abyssinian Crimsonwing	<i>Cryptospiza salvadorii</i>	u	R		AH	FR
Yellow-bellied Waxbill	<i>Estrilda quartinia</i>	f	R			SHL
Red-checked Cordonbleu	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>	r	R			SHL
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>	u	R			OH
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullata</i>	r	R			OH
<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>						
African Citril	<i>Serinus citrinelloides</i>	u	R		AH	WL
Streaky Seedeater	<i>Serinus striolatus</i>	f	R		AH	SHL
Brown-rumped Seedeater	<i>Serinus tristriatus</i>	f	R		AH	SHL
Cape Canary	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>	u	R			SHL

# The birds of the Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone

Ron Demey<sup>a</sup> and Arnold Okoni-Williams<sup>b</sup>

**Les oiseaux des Monts Loma, Sierra Leone.** En 18 jours de travaux sur le terrain dans les Monts Loma, au nord-est de la Sierra Leone, du 14 février au 2 mars 2008, nous avons recensé 257 espèces d'oiseaux. En prenant en compte les mentions publiées précédemment, le nombre total des espèces d'oiseaux connues du site, qui est une Zone d'Importance pour la Conservation des Oiseaux, est à présent de 339, ou plus de 50% des espèces enregistrées dans le pays entier. Parmi celles-ci, une est Menacée d'extinction (le Vautour charognard *Necrosyrtes monachus*), sept sont classées comme Vulnérables (l'Aigle martial *Polemaetus bellicosus*, la Chouette-pêcheuse rousse *Scotopelia ussheri*, le Calao à joues brunes *Bycanistes cylindricus*, le Calao à casque jaune *Ceratogymna elata*, le Bulbul à barbe jaune *Criniger olivaceus*, la Prinia du Sierra Leone *Schistolais leontica* et le Picatharte de Guinée *Picathartes gymnocephalus*), sept comme Quasi menacées et une comme Insuffisamment connue. Neuf des 16 espèces confinées à la Zone d'Endémisme d'Oiseaux de la forêt de Haute Guinée sont présentes et 123 (ou 73%) des 168 espèces du biome des forêts guinéo-congolaises connues de Sierra Leone. Le site, qui avait été désigné comme réserve forestière (avec chasse interdite) en 1952, est devenu un parc national en décembre 2013 et supporte toujours des étendues relativement importantes d'habitat intact, devenu rare ailleurs en Afrique de l'Ouest.

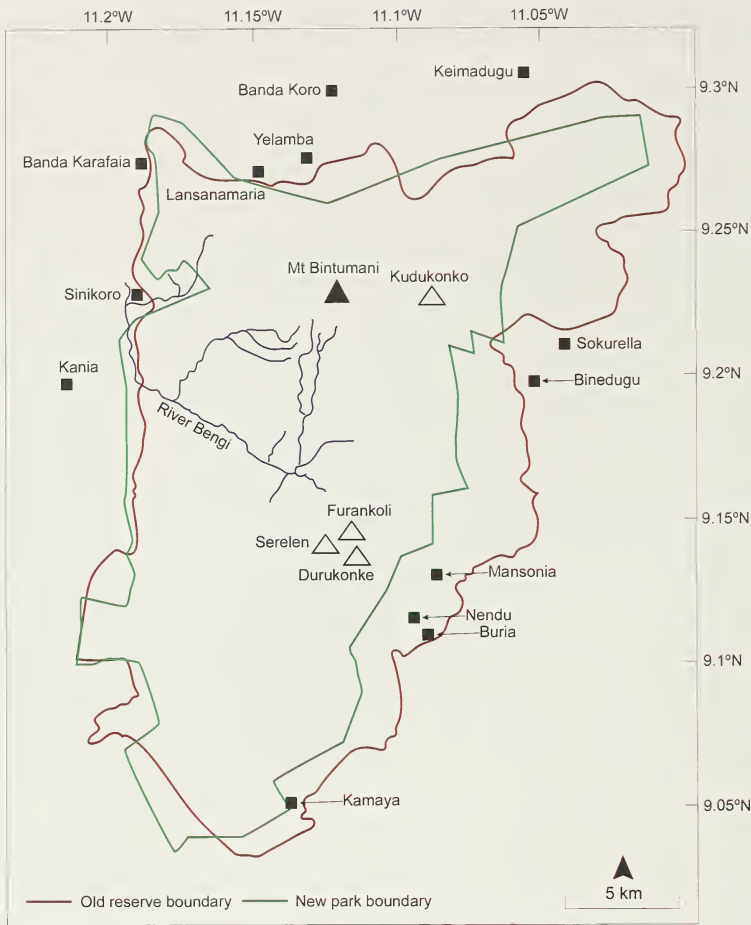
**Summary.** During 18 days of field work in the Loma Mountains, in north-east Sierra Leone, between 14 February and 2 March 2008, 257 bird species were recorded. With previous records, this brings the total number of bird species known from the site, which qualifies as an Important Bird Area, to 339, i.e. more than 50% of the species recorded in the whole of the country. Of these, one is Endangered (Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*), seven are classified as Vulnerable (Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*, Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus*, Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*, Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus*, Sierra Leone Prinia *Schistolais leontica* and Yellow-headed Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus*), seven as Near Threatened and one as Data Deficient. Nine of the 16 species restricted to the Upper Guinea forests Endemic Bird Area occur and 123 (or 73%) of the 168 Guinea-Congo Forests biome species recorded in Sierra Leone. The site, which was designated a non-hunting forest reserve in 1952, became a national park in December 2013 and still holds relatively large tracts of undisturbed habitat, which is rare elsewhere in West Africa.

The Loma Mountains, located in the mountainous north-east of Sierra Leone, support some of the rarest bird species in the country and have been recognized as an Important Bird Area—one of only ten IBAs in Sierra Leone (Okoni-Williams *et al.* 2001). Their altitude varies from c.400 m in the lowlands to 1,945 m at the summit of Mount Bintumani (also called Loma Mansa; 09°13'30"N 11°07'00"W), the highest mountain in West Africa west of Mount Cameroon (Fig. 2). The vegetation comprises Guinea-Congo lowland forest, here near its western limit, with elements of montane evergreen forest up to c.1,700 m (Fig. 3). Tree-ferns occur along watercourses at higher altitudes. On the plateau, most of which lies above 1,200 m, grassland and rocky outcrops are interspersed by strips of gallery forest along the many small streams (Fig. 4). On the slopes of the plateau and at lower altitudes, forest-savanna mosaic occurs (Fig. 5). There

are some villages, cultivated areas and farmbrush around the base, mostly at c.400–500 m (Figs. 6–8); farming does not normally occur beyond the lower slopes (Okoni-Williams *et al.* 2001). The climate consists of a dry season, extending from November to April, and a wet season, in May–October. Mean annual precipitation is 1,600–2,400 mm, with January typically being the driest month and September the wettest. Temperatures range from 10–33°C, with a cooler and more mesic climate in the highlands than in the surrounding lowlands (Cole 1974, Forestry Division 2012).

The forests of the Loma Mountains are part of the Upper Guinea forest block, which forms the western part of the West African Guinean Forests hotspot, one of the 34 biologically richest and most endangered terrestrial ecoregions in the world (Mittermeier *et al.* 2004). West African forests are rapidly disappearing and the survival





**Figure 1.** Map of the Loma Mountains indicating the limits of the former non-hunting forest reserve and the national park (from Forestry Division 2012)

Carte des Monts Loma montrant les limites de l'ancienne réserve forestière et du parc national (d'après Forestry Division 2012)

of birds in the Upper Guinea forests is becoming increasingly dependent on ever-fewer, and smaller, areas. Montane ecosystems are especially rare and the Loma Mountains were thought by Sayer *et al.* (1992) to contain the largest undisturbed tract of such forest remaining in the region, something which remains true. Forty-eight large mammal species have been recorded, among them several listed as Endangered, such as Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes verus*, Western Red Colobus *Piliocolobus badius*, Diana Monkey *Cercopithecus d. diana* and Pygmy Hippopotamus *Hexaprotodon liberiensis*. Whilst the Chimpanzee population may be one of the densest in West Africa, most other large mammals occur at relatively low densities. At least 1,576 vascular plant species have been found, belonging to 135 families and 757 genera, some species being endemic to the Loma Mountains (Forestry Division 2012).

The Loma Mountains are in Koinadugu District, Northern Province, Sierra Leone's largest

and least populated region. The site, designated a non-hunting forest reserve, covering 33,201 ha, in 1952, was upgraded to a national park in December 2013 (Government of Sierra Leone Gazette Vol. CXLIV, No. 2, 16 May 2014), to offset the environmental impact caused by the building of the Bumbuna dam on the Sele River. A preliminary five-year management plan has been proposed (Forestry Division 2012). Due to inconsistencies in the original boundary description and the fact that some encroachment has occurred along the reserve's edges, it was decided to re-demarcate the protected zone and a new boundary, excluding human settlements, was established in 2010 with support of the World Bank, following natural contour lines, inter-village paths and watercourses. Concrete pillars have been erected along the 97.1 km-long new boundary and the planting of 20,000 trees of *Tectona grandis*, *Mangifera indica* and *Heritiera utilis* to serve as live boundary markers has commenced. As a result



**Figure 2.** Mount Bintumani, the highest peak of the Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, February 2008; rising to 1,945 m it is also the highest mountain in West Africa west of Mount Cameroon (Ron Demey)

Le Mont Bintumani, le plus haut sommet des Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, février 2008 ; avec une hauteur de 1.945 m il s'agit également de la plus haute montagne en Afrique de l'Ouest à l'ouest du Mont Cameroun (Ron Demey)

**Figure 3.** Evergreen forest along a (dry) watercourse in the highlands, Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, February 2008 (Ron Demey)

Forêt sempervirente le long d'un cours d'eau (à sec) dans la zone de haute altitude, Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, février 2008 (Ron Demey)



of the re-demarcation, the size of Loma National Park has been reduced to 28,731 ha (Forestry Division 2012; Fig. 1).

The protected area and Mount Bintumani are only accessible on foot via trails from various villages near the boundary. Due to there being no roads within the protected area, while roads to the surrounding villages are poor or non-existent, the relatively low population pressure and the fact that the plateau and most of its slopes are unsuitable for cultivation, habitat-threat levels are currently low (Okoni-Williams *et al.* 2001). However, given that the human population continues to grow,

threats are likely to increase, as local communities are dependent on the park for bushmeat, which provides up to 60% of their protein, and for timber (for construction, firewood and charcoal) (Forestry Division 2012).

The first ornithologist to visit the Loma Mountains was G. L. Bates, who made an extensive tour through Sierra Leone and Guinea in February–August 1930, during which he spent 12 days, on 24 February–7 March, at Banda Karafaia, near the foot of Mount Bintumani in the north-west, at c.500–600 m (*cf.* Fig. 1), where he collected 42 species and observed several





**Figure 4.** The plateau in the Mount Bintumani environs, with grassland and rocky outcrops interspersed by strips of gallery forest, Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, February 2008 (Ron Demey)

Le plateau aux environs du Mont Bintumani, avec des prairies de haute altitude et affleurements rocheux entrecoupés de bandes de forêt galerie, Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, février 2008 (Ron Demey)



**Figure 5.** Forest–savanna mosaic, Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, February 2008 (Ron Demey)

Mosaïque de forêt–savane, Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, février 2008 (Ron Demey)

others (Bannerman 1931–32, Bates 1931; see Appendix 1). He climbed the mountain on 9 March, having spent the previous day at a camp site at c.900 m, where he collected three species and observed two additional ones; higher up he collected just two more specimens, one of which was the type of *Saxicola torquatus nebularum* (described in Bates 1930). To the list from Banda Karafaia, a specimen of Narrow-tailed Starling *Poeoptera lugubris*, secured by G. J. Houghton (who collected birds in Sierra Leone, mostly on the Freetown Peninsula, in February 1911–March 1914), must be added (Bannerman 1932). William Serle visited Mount Bintumani in late November 1942 and again in mid-April 1946, and listed 35 species (including two from Banda Karafaia), of which 21 were new for the site and 22 were substantiated by specimens (Serle 1948–49). R. R. Glanville camped for ten days north of Mount Bintumani at c.900 m on 2–11 January 1951, and climbed the summit on 10th (Glanville

1951). His list contains 59 species (although he mentions recording 62), of which 32 were new and an equal number (not all of them new) were supported by specimens. Geoffrey Field, a long-time resident based in Freetown, visited the mountains for five days in the first week of January 1973 and published some of his records, six of which were new for the site (Field 1973, 1974). The first systematic survey was undertaken by a University of East Anglia team (UEA) in February–April 1992, which recorded 247 species in eight weeks (Atkinson *et al.* 1996), of which 149 were additions to the site list. Among these, however, four had not previously been found in the country and therefore require proper documentation to be accepted. A. Kortenhoven, a biologist studying ungulates in Loma, observed birds opportunistically in July 2002 and between May 2006 and October 2007. He recorded 101 species (A. Kortenhoven pers. comm.), of which 17 had not been found previously.



**Figure 6.** Farmbush and forest, Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, February 2008 (Ron Demey)

Formations secondaires post-culturelles et forêt, Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, février 2008 (Ron Demey)

**Figure 7.** Cultivation in forest near Sinikoro, Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, February 2008 (Ron Demey)

Cultures en forêt près de Sinikoro, Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, février 2008 (Ron Demey)

**Figure 8.** Savanna near Sinikoro, Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, February 2008 (Ron Demey)

Savane près de Sinikoro, Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, février 2008 (Ron Demey)



Here we present the results of 18 days of field work in the Loma Mountains, carried out in the dry season, from 14 February to 2 March 2008, and refer to previous records where relevant. A comprehensive list of the birds recorded in the Loma Mountains is given in Appendix 1.

### Study area and Methods

We accessed the area via the village of Sinikoro, located at the north-western limits of the national park (see Fig. 1). Three camps were established. The main camp, hereafter named Camp 1 (09°12'45.10"N 11°08'37.40"W; 14–25 February), was sited next to a small, rocky stream at the forest edge at 1,330 m, just below the plateau. A few paths and transects ran from this camp in various directions; the main path reached the edge of the plateau after c.300 m.

Camp 2 (09°13'21.00"N 11°09'28.47"W; 26–28 February) was established along the path to Camp 1 within closed-canopy forest on sloping terrain crossed by small, rocky streams at c.770 m. Approximately 100 m below the camp was an area of wooded savanna.

Camp 3 was established at the edge of Sinikoro (09°13'48.50"N 11°11'49.70"W; 29 February–2 March) along the main access road, at 400 m. Patches of closed-canopy forest alternated with more open and degraded areas, farmbush, recently cut clearings, agricultural plots and wooded savanna.

The principal method used during this study consisted of observing birds by walking slowly along tracks and trails, where present, and stopping frequently. Attempts were made to cover as much ground and visit as many habitats as possible.



Mist-netting was carried out on one morning and one afternoon at each of the three locations. Two 6-m nets were set in forest next to small streams for a total of 42 hours (5.04 100-m net-hours).

The weather was usually sunny with daytime temperatures of 18–24°C in the highlands, to more than 30°C in the lowlands; at night, temperatures could be as low as 15°C in both areas. Although the sky was clear on the first two days, it became increasingly hazy thereafter due to the Harmattan, the dry and dusty north-easterly wind from the Sahara, which was particularly strong on some days. It rained only twice: a short, heavy shower at 17.00–17.30 hrs on 25 February and continuous rain at 22.00–06.30 hrs during the night of 28–29 February.

## Results

In total, 257 species were recorded by us (see Appendix 1). Of these, four are classified as Vulnerable (Martial Eagle *Polemaetus bellicosus*, Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*, Yellow-headed Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* and Sierra Leone Prinia *Schistolais leontica*), seven as Near Threatened (Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus*, Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Blue-moustached Bee-eater *Merops mentalis*, Black-headed Rufous Warbler *Bathmocercus cerviniventris*, Rufous-winged Illadopsis *Illadopsis rufescens* and Copper-tailed Glossy Starling *Hylopsar cupreocauda*), while one is considered Data Deficient (Emerald Starling *Lamprotornis iris*) (BirdLife International 2014). Rufous Fishing Owl *Scotopelia ussheri*, classified as Vulnerable and recorded during the 1992 survey (Atkinson *et al.* 1996), was possibly heard on one occasion.

Among the 13 mist-netted species (Appendix 2), just one—White-bellied Kingfisher *Corythornis leucogaster*—was not recorded otherwise. Fifty-one species had not been recorded previously. Thus, 339 bird species are now known from the site (Appendix 1). These comprise 289 presumed residents, 31 Palearctic migrants and 16 intra-African migrants. Of the remaining three species, two involve a mix of both potentially resident individuals and either Palearctic or intra-African migrants, and the third is an intra-African vagrant.

Species of global conservation concern recorded in 1992 (Atkinson *et al.* 1996) and not observed

in 2008 include Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus* and Yellow-bearded Greenbul *Criniger olivaceus*.

In total, nine of the 16 restricted-range species, i.e. landbirds with a global breeding range of <50,000 km<sup>2</sup>, whose combined distributions cover the Upper Guinea forests Endemic Bird Area (which extends from Sierra Leone and south-east Guinea to south-west Ghana: Stattersfield *et al.* 1998, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014) are now known from the site (Appendix 1). The site thus holds an important proportion of Upper Guinea endemics. Of the 168 Guinea–Congo forests biome species recorded in Sierra Leone (Okoni-Williams *et al.* 2001), 123 (73%), have been found in the Loma Mountains, whilst six (21.5%) of the 28 Sudan–Guinea Savanna biome species also occur (Appendix 1). Note that in the light of recent field work or taxonomic reappraisals, some changes have been made to the lists of restricted-range and biome-restricted species (*cf.* Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014: 75–79).

## Notes on selected species

The following notes provide details mainly on the species of conservation concern and some that are noteworthy in West Africa. Sequence and scientific nomenclature generally follow the *Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (Dickinson & Remsen 2013, Dickinson & Chiristidis 2014). English names are those used in Borrow & Demey (2014). IUCN Red List categories (BirdLife International 2014) are indicated by EN = Endangered; VU = Vulnerable; NT = Near Threatened; DD = Data Deficient.

### Bateleur *Terathopius ecaudatus* NT

Observed just once, flying over the highlands in the environs of Camp 1 at c.1,300 m. Serle (1948) saw one at Mount Bintumani on 18 April 1946. An open-country species that may wander widely; considered a vagrant to Sierra Leone (Borrow & Demey 2014, Dowsett *et al.* 2014).

### Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* EN

Not observed in 2008. Noted as common (daily records) in farmbrush by the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996).

**Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* NT

Recorded on 12 out of 18 days, at all altitudes. Usually one or a pair displaying above the forest around midday; once four adults together. Not observed by the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996); Glanville (1961) reported one at c.900 m.

**Martial Eagle** *Polemaetus bellicosus* VU

An adult soaring high above the highlands on 24 February. Mentioned as rare (1–2 records) in February–April 1992 (Atkinson *et al.* 1996).

**Pallid Harrier** *Circus macrourus* NT

Observed twice: an immature on 20 February and an adult female on 23 February, both hunting over montane grassland. Serle (1948) observed a single quartering the grasslands at c.1,675 m on 22 November 1942 and Glanville (1961) saw an immature, which he believed to be this species, in the same area in January 1951. An uncommon or scarce to locally fairly common Palearctic visitor to West Africa, just reaching northern Sierra Leone.

**Rufous Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia ussheri* VU

An owl call, emanating from gallery forest in the highlands just before dawn on 20 February, was possibly of this species. The UEA expedition had seven sightings of probably two individuals along the Benge River (Atkinson *et al.* 1996).

**Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna elata* VU

Relatively common in forest at low and mid altitudes (400–800 m), with daily observations of up to six individuals. Also observed daily in 1992 (Atkinson *et al.* 1996). A not uncommon resident in tall forest in eastern Sierra Leone (e.g. Gola Forest), but rare to uncommon and local elsewhere in its fragmented range from south-west Senegal to western Cameroon.

**Brown-cheeked Hornbill** *Bycanistes cylindricus* VU

Just one record, on 3 February 1992, of a single in mature secondary forest at low altitudes (Atkinson *et al.* 1996). This Upper Guinea endemic reaches the western limits of its range in Sierra Leone.

**Blue-moustached Bee-eater** *Merops mentalis* NT

Four seen in the Sinikoro area on 2 March. Noted as ‘frequent’ by the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996). This taxon was previously treated

as a subspecies of Blue-headed Bee-eater *M. muelleri*, but has recently been afforded species rank (BirdLife International 2014).

**Lesser Kestrel** *Falco naumanni*

Observed twice in 1992, over montane grassland near Mount Bintumani, at c.1,900 m (Atkinson *et al.* 1996). This Palearctic migrant, which is an uncommon to locally fairly common visitor to West Africa, was not encountered in 2008.

**Yellow-headed Picathartes** *Picathartes gymnocephalus* VU

Two singles were encountered in forest at higher altitudes. A large rock within the forest in the vicinity of Camp 2 had a single fresh nest. With the help of local villagers, the UEA expedition found 11 breeding sites, four of them abandoned, each containing 2–3 nests, the majority in very disturbed forest outside the protected area (Atkinson *et al.* 1996).

**Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting** *Fringillaria tahapisi*

A nest containing a single, feathered chick was found on 15 February on the highland plateau, below a tuft of dry grass that had survived a bush fire; thereafter the nest was checked daily from a distance and was found empty on 24 February. The species was very common in rocky grassland at high altitudes, with daily sightings of up to 15; also observed in wooded savanna at c.700 m. Reported by all previous observers; Serle (1949) found it in November 1942, but not on his second visit in mid-April 1946, suggesting the species may spend the rainy season elsewhere.

**Ortolan Bunting** *Emberiza hortulana*

One at the edge of gallery forest at c.1,600 m on 17 February. Field (1973) found the species to be common in January 1973 on the steep south-east face of Mount Bintumani, at c.1,640–1,820 m; he tentatively estimated that up to 50 may have been present. A generally rare Palearctic winter visitor to West Africa, but locally fairly common in a few uplands (Borrow & Demey 2014).

**Rufous-naped Lark** *Mirafra africana*

Singles were observed on five days in highland grassland; one was displaying on 17 February. Reported as ‘rare’ by the UEA expedition



(Atkinson *et al.* 1996). West of Nigeria, the species is represented by the subspecies *henrici*, which is very local and has been recorded only on Mount Nimba and at a handful of sites in Sierra Leone and Guinea.

**Sierra Leone Prinia** *Schistolais leontica* VU

Three family groups of 3–4 individuals were observed in bracken and shrubbery at forest edge, at c.1,300–1,400 m, in the environs of Camp 1. The species was also recorded in 1992, when three groups of 3–4 birds were seen in high-altitude gallery forest (Atkinson *et al.* 1996). This Upper Guinea endemic is uncommon to rare and extremely local, from Guinea to extreme western Côte d'Ivoire.

**Black-headed Rufous Warbler** *Bathmocercus cerviniventris* NT

Two pairs and three males were found in dense vegetation in moist areas and near a small stream at the forest edge in the environs of Sinikoro. All were singing; the pairs duetting. This Upper Guinea endemic has a fragmented range and is generally rare to uncommon and very local.

**Yellow-bearded Greenbul** *Criniger olivaceus* VU

Not observed in 2008. An adult and a recently fledged juvenile were trapped in lowland forest on 30 March 1992 and a further five sightings were obtained during the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996).

**Baumann's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus baumanni*

Three individuals were found: in low, dense shrubbery at the forest edge (adjacent to a Sierra Leone Prinia territory) and in thick, bushy vegetation just inside rather open forest at 1,300–1,400 m, and in farmbush at c.400 m. They were located by their song, which was uttered only occasionally and most often in the early morning, when it was more sustained, but also, albeit very briefly, later in the day, including late afternoon. This species' status has changed from Near Threatened (Collar *et al.* 1994) and Data Deficient (BirdLife International 2000, 2004) to Least Concern due to increased knowledge (Dowsett-Lemaire *et al.* 2011, BirdLife International 2014).

**Rufous-winged Illadopsis** *Illadopsis rufescens* NT  
Fairly common, with 1–3 singing individuals recorded in forest almost daily, at all altitudes. Also recorded as 'frequent' in lowland and gallery forest by the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996). Bates secured a specimen at Banda Karafaia (Bannerman 1932), Serle (1949) collected two males at c.760 m and c.1,220 m, respectively, and Glanville (1961) a male at c.915 m.

**Emerald Starling** *Lamprolornis iris* DD

Observed in wooded savanna at 400 m on two days: four individuals on 1 March and a group of nine the next day. Bates obtained a specimen at Banda Karafaia (Bannerman 1932).

**Copper-tailed Glossy Starling** *Hylopsar cupreocauda* NT

Uncommon, with only 1–3 individuals per day in the lowlands, at c.400 m. This Upper Guinea endemic reaches the north-western limits of its range at Loma.

**Common Rock Thrush** *Monticola saxatilis*

Observed on 20 February (one) and 25 February (two), at the edge of gallery forest on the rocky plateau at c.1,600 m. Also reported by Field (1973) in similar habitat and on the slopes of Mount Bintumani, and by A. Kortenhoven (pers. comm.). A rare to scarce Palearctic winter visitor to West Africa (Borrow & Demey 2014).

**Blue Rock Thrush** *Monticola solitarius*

Field (1973) observed the species on several occasions on the rocky south-east face of Mount Bintumani, from c.1,640 m to the summit, in January 1973, with five individuals on one morning. A patchily distributed, rare to scarce Palearctic winter visitor to West Africa, favouring rocky habitats (Borrow & Demey 2014).

**Grey Ground Thrush** *Geokichla princei*

One foraging in leaf litter along a forest stream in the highlands was observed for c.15 minutes on 22 February. Reported as 'rare' in lowland forest by the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996). These are the westernmost records of this extremely shy and rarely observed forest species.

## Species whose presence is doubtful or requires confirmation

The following four species listed by the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996) had not previously been found in Sierra Leone and would therefore need proper documentation, lacking in the report, to be accepted.

### **Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus*

One reportedly seen at 20.00 hrs 'hawking and sitting on lianas over Benge River near lowland base camp on 18 April 1992'. Although the habitat is suitable and the record may well be correct, Black-shouldered Nightjar *Caprimulgus (pectoralis) nigriscapularis*, not listed in the report yet recorded in 2008, cannot be eliminated. Brown Nightjar has since been documented in Gola Forest (Lindsell *et al.* 2008) and Tiwai Island (Klop *et al.* 2010, N. Borrow in *Bull. ABC* 15: 275)—the westernmost records to date.

### **Chestnut-bellied Starling** *Lamprotornis pulcher*

One seen 'high in trees on forested slopes c.2 km north-east of lowland base camp on 7 March 1992'. The presence of this Sahel species is highly unlikely. Confusion with Emerald Starling, not listed in the report and whose distinctive coloration can be surprisingly hard to distinguish in certain lights (RD pers. obs.), cannot be eliminated.

### **Familiar Chat** *Oenanthe familiaris*

### **Black-rumped Waxbill** *Estrilda troglodytes*

Both observed in grassland below Bintumani peak on 9 April 1992, the former on boulders. These would be interesting records, as they are quite distant from the nearest sites where the species are known to occur, in Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. The habitat appears suitable for both.

## Discussion

The total of 339 bird species now known to occur in the Loma Mountains is remarkably high, representing more than 50% of the species documented for Sierra Leone (*cf.* Dowsett *et al.* 2014). Although all major habitats have been surveyed, this total is likely to further increase with additional survey work conducted at different seasons. Moreover, 15 species of global conservation concern occur—one Endangered, seven Vulnerable and seven Near Threatened—

i.e. almost half of those known in the country (BirdLife International 2014). Among these, the charismatic Yellow-headed Picathartes and the rare and little-known Rufous Fishing Owl are especially noteworthy. Moreover, highlands are a very rare habitat in West Africa and support particular bird species, such as Sierra Leone Prinia, which is very local in its restricted range and known from only one other site in Sierra Leone, the Tingi Hills (Okoni-Williams *et al.* 2001). Most Palearctic migrants were encountered at higher altitudes, an observation also made by the UEA expedition (Atkinson *et al.* 1996); Loma appears to be an important wintering and passage area for some species, e.g. Common House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Tree Pipit *Anthus trivialis*, Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*, Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin*, Blackcap *S. atricapilla* and Pied Flycatcher *Ficedula hypoleuca*. Also worthy of note is the presence of Common and Blue Rock Thrushes and Ortolan Bunting, which are rare to uncommon and local winter visitors in West Africa. The number of restricted-range species is also significant: nine of the 16 restricted-range species, and 123, or 73%, of the 168 Guinea-Congo Forests biome species recorded in Sierra Leone. The fact that Loma still harbours relatively large tracts of undisturbed habitat, which is rare elsewhere in West Africa, further highlights its importance for the conservation of biodiversity. Its recent upgrading to national park combined with its relatively remote location and difficulty of access gives cause for hope that it may survive the ongoing onslaught on natural habitats throughout the region.

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## Appendix 1. Bird species recorded in the Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone.

Sequence and scientific nomenclature generally follow the *Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (=H&M4; Dickinson & Remsen 2013, Dickinson & Christidis 2014). Amendments include placing Black Dwarf Hornbill and White-crested Hornbill in *Horizocerus*, following a recent study (Gonzalez *et al.* 2013a,b), and the barbets in *Lybiidae*, following del Hoyo & Collar (2014). Specific names within parentheses indicate that the form in question is treated as a subspecies in H&M4; thus *Caprimulgus (pectoralis) nigriscapularis* is considered to be a race of *C. pectoralis*. If different, scientific names used in Borrow & Demey (2014) are mentioned in square brackets. English names are those used in Borrow & Demey (2014).

**2008 Survey:** Species recorded during the survey of 14 February–2 March 2008; 1 = at >1,100 m, 2 = 700–800 m, 3 = c.400 m.

**Kortenhoven:** Species recorded by A. Kortenhoven (pers. comm.) in July 2002 and May 2006–October 2007.

**1992 Survey:** Species recorded by the University of East Anglia expedition, February–April 1992 (Atkinson *et al.* 1996).

**Field 1973:** Species recorded by G. Field in early January 1973 (Field 1973, 1974).

**Glanv. 1951:** Species recorded by R. R. Glanville on 2–11 January 1951 (Glanville 1961); \* = specimen, (x) = probable record.

**Serle 1942/46:** Species recorded by W. Serle in late November 1942 and mid-April 1946 (Serle 1948–49); \* = specimen.

**Bates 1930:** Species recorded by G. L. Bates on 24 February–9 March 1930 (Bannerman 1931–32, Bates 1931); \* = specimen, (x) = probable record; x\*+ = specimen collected by G. J. Houghton.

**Status** (Borrow & Demey 2001, 2014; Dowsett *et al.* 2014): R = Resident; PM = Palearctic migrant; AM = Intra-African migrant / AMb: breeding in Sierra Leone confirmed; AV = African vagrant.

**IUCN Red List category** (BirdLife International 2014): EN = Endangered; VU = Vulnerable; NT = Near Threatened; DD = Data Deficient.

**Rest. Range** (= Restricted Range): UGF = Restricted to the Upper Guinea forest Endemic Bird Area (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014).

**Biome:** GCF = Restricted to the Guinea-Congo Forests biome; SGS = Restricted to the Sudan-Guinea Savanna biome.

**Habitat:** Fo = Primary and secondary forest; Fg = Gallery forest and forest patches in savanna; Fe = Forest edges; Gr = Montane grassland with rocky outcrops; Sa = Wooded savanna; Cf = Cultivated areas, large clearings and farmbrush; Ao = Aerial and flying overhead; Aq = Aquatic habitats (streams and ponds).

## Annexe 1. Espèces d'oiseaux observées dans les Monts Loma, Sierra Leone.

L'ordre et la nomenclature scientifique suivent en général *Howard & Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (=H&M4; Dickinson & Remsen 2013, Dickinson & Christidis 2014). Les amendements comprennent le placement du Calao de Hartlaub et du Calao à huppe blanche dans *Horizocerus*, suivant une étude récente (Gonzalez *et al.* 2013a,b), et les barbous dans *Lybiidae*, suivant del Hoyo & Collar (2014). Les noms scientifiques entre parenthèses indiquent que la forme en question est traitée comme une sous-espèce par H&M4 ; ainsi *Caprimulgus (pectoralis) nigriscapularis* est considéré comme une sous-espèce de *C. pectoralis*. Dans les cas où les noms scientifiques utilisés dans Borrow & Demey (2014) diffèrent, ces derniers sont mentionnés entre crochets. Les noms anglais sont ceux utilisés dans Borrow & Demey (2014).

**2008 Inventaire :** Espèces recensées pendant l'inventaire du 14 février–2 mars 2008 ; 1 = à >1,100 m, 2 = 700–800 m, 3 = à environ 400 m.

**Kortenhoven :** Espèces recensées par A. Kortenhoven (comm. pers.) en juillet 2002 et mai 2006–octobre 2007.

**1992 Inventaire :** Espèces recensées pendant l'inventaire de l'expédition de l'Université de East Anglia, en février–avril 1992 (Atkinson *et al.* 1996).

**Field 1973 :** Espèces recensées par G. Field au début janvier 1973 (Field 1973, 1974).

**Glanv. 1951 :** Espèces recensées par R. R. Glanville, 2–11 janvier 1951 (Glanville 1961) ; \* = spécimen, (x) = observation probable.

**Serle 1942/46 :** Espèces recensées par W. Serle fin novembre 1942 et mi-avril 1946 (Serle 1948–49) ; \* = spécimen.

**Bates 1930 :** Espèces recensées par G. L. Bates, 24 février–9 mars 1930 (Bannerman 1931–32, Bates 1931) ; \* = spécimen, (x) = observation probable ; x\*+ = spécimen collecté par G. J. Houghton.

**Statut** (Borrow & Demey 2001, 2014 ; Dowsett *et al.* 2014) : R = Résident ; PM = Migrateur paléarctique ; AM = Migrateur intra-africain / AMb = nidification en Sierra Leone confirmée ; AV = Occasionnel africain.

**Catégorie de la Liste Rouge UICN** (BirdLife International 2014) : EN = Menacé d'extinction ; VU = Vulnérable ; NT = Quasi menacé ; DD = Insuffisamment connu.

**Rest. Range** (= Restricted Range) : UGF = Confiné à la Zone d'Endémisme d'Oiseaux de la forêt de Haute Guinée (Stattersfield *et al.* 1998, Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014).

**Biome :** GCF = Confiné au biome des forêts guinéo-congolaises ; SGS = Confiné au biome de la savane soudano-guinéenne.

**Habitat :** Fo = Forêt primaire et secondaire ; Fg = Forêt galerie et îlots de forêt en savane ; Fe = Lisières ; Gr = Prairies de haute altitude avec affleurements rocheux ; Sa = Savane boisée ; Cf = Zones cultivées, grandes clairières et broussailles ; Ao = Dans les airs et survolant le site ; Aq = Habitats aquatiques (cours d'eau et mares).



		2008 Survey	Kortenoven	1992 Survey	Field 1972	Glanv. 1951	Serie 1942/46	Bates 1930	Status	IUCN	Rest. Range	Biome	Habitat
<b>ANATIDAE</b>													
Hartlaub's Duck	<i>Pteronetta hartlaubii</i>		x	x					R			GCF	Aq
<b>NUMIDIDAE</b>													
Crested Guineafowl	<i>Guttera pucherani</i>		x	x		x			R				Fo
<b>ODONTOPHORIDAE</b>													
Stone Partridge	<i>Ptilopachus petrosus</i>	1		x		x			R				Gr, Cf
<b>PHASIANIDAE</b>													
Common Quail	<i>Coturnix coturnix</i>	1							PM				Gr
Blue Quail	<i>Synoicus adansonii</i>		x						R				Gr
Double-spurred Francolin	<i>Pternistis bicalcaratus</i>	3	x	x					R				Sa
Ahanta Francolin	<i>Pternistis achantensis</i>	1	x					x	R			GCF	Fe
Latham's Forest Francolin	<i>Peliperdix lathamii</i>	2,3		x		x*			R			GCF	Fo
<b>COLUMBIDAE</b>													
Western Bronze-naped Pigeon	<i>Columba iriditorques</i>	1,2,3		x		x		(x)	R			GCF	Fo
Lemon Dove	<i>Aplopelia larvata</i>	3							R				Fo
Red-eyed Dove	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>	3		x				x	R				Cf
Laughing Dove	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>	3							R				Sa
African Green Pigeon	<i>Treron calvus</i>	1,2,3		x		x			R				Fo, Fg
Blue-spotted Wood Dove	<i>Turtur afer</i>	1,2,3		x		x		x	R				Cf, Sa
Tambourine Dove	<i>Turtur tympanistria</i>	1,2,3		x		x			R				Fo, Fe
Blue-headed Wood Dove	<i>Turtur brehmeri</i>	1,2,3		x		x*			R			GCF	Fo
<b>CAPRIMULGIDAE</b>													
Black-shouldered Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus (pectoralis) nigriscapularis</i>	1							R				Fe
Plain Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus inornatus</i>	1							R				Gr
Freckled Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus tristigma</i>	1		x					R				Gr
Long-tailed Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus climacurus</i>	1		x					R				Gr
Standard-winged Nightjar	<i>Caprimulgus longipennis</i>	1,3		x					AMb				Gr
<b>APODIDAE</b>													
Sabine's Spinetail	<i>Rhaphidura sabini</i>	2,3		x				(x)	R			GCF	Fo
Cassin's Spinetail	<i>Neafrapus cassini</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
African Palm Swift	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>			x					R				Cf
Alpine Swift	<i>Tachymarpis melba</i>	1							PM				Ao
Mottled Swift	<i>Tachymarpis aequatorialis</i>	1							R				Ao
White-rumped Swift	<i>Apus caffer</i>			x					R				Ao
Little Swift	<i>Apus affinis</i>			x					R				Ao
African Black Swift	<i>Apus barbatus</i>	1							R				Ao
Common Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	1?		x		(x)			PM				Ao
<b>CUCULIDAE</b>													
Black-throated Coucal	<i>Centropus leucogaster</i>	3							R			GCF	Fo
Senegal Coucal	<i>Centropus senegalensis</i>	1,3	x	x		x			R				Cf, Sa
Yellowbill	<i>Ceuthmochares aereus</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Fo
Levaillant's Cuckoo	<i>Clamator levaillantii</i>	1,3							AMb				Cf, Fg
Yellow-throated Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx flavigularis</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
Klaas's Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx klaas</i>	1,2,3	x	x					AMb				Cf, Fe

		2008 Survey	Kortenhoven	1992 Survey	Field 1972	Glanv. 1951	Serle 1942/46	Bates 1930	Status	IUCN	Rest. Range	Biome	Habitat
African Emerald Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx cupreus</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x	R				Fo
Didric Cuckoo	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>	3	x	x					AMB				Cf
Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo	<i>Cercococcyx mechowi</i>	1,2,3		x				x*	R			GCF	Fo
Olive Long-tailed Cuckoo	<i>Cercococcyx olivinus</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
Red-chested Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus solitarius</i>	1,2,3		x					AM				Fo
Black Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus clamosus</i>			x					AM				Fo
<b>RALLIDAE</b>													
Nkulengu Rail	<i>Himantornis haematopus</i>					x*			R				
Grey-throated Rail	<i>Canirallus oculus</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
Common Moorhen	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>		x						R				Aq
<b>SAROTHRURIDAE</b>													
White-spotted Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura pulchra</i>	3							R			GCF	Cf, Aq
Buff-spotted Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura elegans</i>		x						R				
Red-chested Flufftail	<i>Sarothrura rufa</i>			x					R				Cf
<b>HELIORNITHIDAE</b>													
African Finfoot	<i>Podica senegalensis</i>			x					R				Fo, Aq
<b>MUSOPHAGIDAE</b>													
Great Blue Turaco	<i>Corythaëola cristata</i>	1,3	x	x		x	x		R				Fo, Fg
Green Turaco	<i>Tauraco persa</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x	x	x*	R			GCF	Fo, Fg
<b>CICONIIDAE</b>													
Woolly-necked Stork	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>			x					R				Cf, Fe
<b>SCOPIDAE</b>													
Hamerkop	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>		x	x					R				Sa
<b>ARDEIDAE</b>													
White-crested Tiger Heron	<i>Tigriomis leucolopha</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
Green-backed Heron	<i>Butorides striata</i>			x					R				Aq
Little Egret	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>			x					R/PM				Aq
<b>BURHINIDAE</b>													
Senegal Thick-knee	<i>Burhinus senegalensis</i>			x					R				Cf
<b>SCOLOPACIDAE</b>													
Common Sandpiper	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>			x					PM				Aq
<b>ACCIPITRIDAE</b>													
European Honey Buzzard	<i>Pernis apivorus</i>	3		x					PM				Ao
African Harrier Hawk	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x			R				Fo
Palm-nut Vulture	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x		x	R				Ao
Bateleur	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	1					x		AV	NT			Ao
Hooded Vulture	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>			x				x	R	EN			Cf
Bat Hawk	<i>Macheiramphus alcinus</i>		x	x					R				Fo
Crowned Eagle	<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>	1,2,3				x			R	NT			Ao, Fo
Marial Eagle	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	1	x	x					R	VU			Ao, Sa
Long-crested Eagle	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>	1,3	x						R				Ao, Cf
African Hawk Eagle	<i>Aquila spilogaster</i>			x					R				Gr
Cassin's Hawk Eagle	<i>Aquila africana</i>	3		x		x*			R				Fo
Wahlberg's Eagle	<i>Hieraetus wahlbergi</i>	3							AM				Sa
Booted Eagle	<i>Hieraetus pennatus</i>	1							PM				Ao



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Ayres's Eagle	<i>Hieraetus ayresii</i>		x						R				Fo
Lizard Buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>	3		x					R				Sa
Western Marsh Harrier	<i>Circus aeruginosus</i>	1		x					PM				Gr
Pallid Harrier	<i>Circus macrourus</i>	1				(x)	x		PM	NT			Gr
African Goshawk	<i>Accipiter tachiro</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Fo
Black Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter melanoleucus</i>	3	x	x					R				Cf
Long-tailed Hawk	<i>Urotriorchis macrourus</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
Yellow-billed Kite	<i>Milvus migrans parasitus</i>			x				x	AMb				Cf
Red-necked Buzzard	<i>Buteo auguralis</i>	1,2,3	x	x					R				Ao
<b>STRIGIDAE</b>													
African Wood Owl	<i>Strix woodfordii</i>	1,3		x					R				Fo, Fe
Greyish Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo (africanus) cinerascens</i>			x					R				Sa
Fraser's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo poensis</i>	1,2							R				Fo
Verreaux's Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>	3							R				Cf
Akun Eagle Owl	<i>Bubo leucostictus</i>			x					R			GCF	Fg
Rufous Fishing Owl	<i>Scotopelia ussheri</i>	1?		x					R	VU	UGF	GCF	Fo, Aq
<b>TROGONIDAE</b>													
Narina's Trogon	<i>Apaloderma narina</i>	1,2,3		x		x			R				Fo, Fg
<b>BUCEROTIDAE</b>													
African Pied Hornbill	<i>Tockus fasciatus</i>	3	x	x		x		x*	R			GCF	Fo, Cf, Fe
Black Dwarf Hornbill	<i>Horizocerus hartlaubi</i>		x	x					R			GCF	Fo
White-crested Hornbill	<i>Horizocerus albocristatus</i>		x	x			x		R			GCF	Fo
Black-casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna atrata</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
Yellow-casqued Hornbill	<i>Ceratogymna elata</i>	1,2,3		x		x		x	R	VU		GCF	Fo
Piping Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes fistulator</i>	3	x					(x)	R			GCF	Fo
Brown-cheeked Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes cylindricus</i>			x					R	VU	UGF	GCF	Fo
Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill	<i>Bycanistes subcylindricus</i>	2,3							R			GCF	Fo
<b>INDICATORIDAE</b>													
Thick-billed Honeyguide	<i>Indicator (minor) conirostris</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Fo
Spotted Honeyguide	<i>Indicator maculatus</i>	1		x				x*	R			GCF	Fo
Lyre-tailed Honeyguide	<i>Melichneutes robustus</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
<b>PICIDAE</b>													
Eurasian Wryneck	<i>Jynx torquilla</i>	1							PM				Fg
Little Green Woodpecker	<i>Campethera maculosa</i>	3	x						R				Fo, Fe
Buff-spotted Woodpecker	<i>Campethera nivosa</i>	2,3	x	x				x*	R			GCF	Fo
Brown-eared Woodpecker	<i>Campethera caroli</i>	1				x*			R			GCF	Fo
Cardinal Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>	3		x					R				Sa
Melancholy Woodpecker	<i>Dendropicos (gabonensis) lugubris</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x*	R			GCF	Fo, Cf
Fire-bellied Woodpecker	<i>Chloropicus pyrrhogaster</i>	1,2,3		x		x*			R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Grey Woodpecker	<i>Mesopicos goertae</i>	3							R				Sa
Brown-backed Woodpecker	<i>Ipophilus obsoletus</i>		x						R				Sa
<b>LYBIIDAE</b>													
Yellow-spotted Barbet	<i>Buccanodon duchaillui</i>	2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Naked-faced Barbet	<i>Gymnobucco calvus</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x*			R			GCF	Fo, Fe, Cf

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Speckled Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus scolopaceus</i>	1,2,3	x	x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe, Fg
Red-rumped Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus atroflavus</i>	1,2,3		x			x*		R			GCF	Fo
Yellow-throated Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus subsulphureus</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird	<i>Pogoniulus bilineatus</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x*			R				Fg, Sa
Vieillot's Barbet	<i>Lybius vieilloti</i>	3							R				Sa
Double-toothed Barbet	<i>Pogonornis bidentatus</i>	1	x	x					R				Fg
Yellow-billed Barbet	<i>Trachylaemus purpuratus</i>	1,3							R			GCF	Fo, Fe
<b>MEROPIDAE</b>													
White-throated Bee-eater	<i>Merops albicollis</i>	2,3	x	x		x			AM				Ao, Sa, Cf
European Bee-eater	<i>Merops apiaster</i>	2,3	x			x*			PM				Sa
Little Bee-eater	<i>Merops pusillus</i>	1,2,3	x	x			x*	x	R				Gr, Sa
Black Bee-eater	<i>Merops gularis</i>	1,3	x	x					R			GCF	Fo, Fg, Fe
Blue-moustached Bee-eater	<i>Merops mentalis</i>	3		x					R	NT		GCF	Fo
<b>CORACIIDAE</b>													
Rufous-crowned Roller	<i>Coracias naevius</i>		x						AM				Sa
Blue-throated Roller	<i>Eurystomus gularis</i>	3		x					R			GCF	Cf, Fe
Broad-billed Roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>	3		x					AMb				Cf, Fe
<b>ALCEDINIDAE</b>													
African Dwarf Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina lecontei</i>			x			x*		R			GCF	Fo
African Pygmy Kingfisher	<i>Ispidina picta</i>	3	x	x					R/AMb				Cf
White-bellied Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis leucogaster</i>	2		x					R			GCF	Fo, Aq
Malachite Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis cristatus</i>			x					R				Aq
Shining-blue Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo quadribrachys</i>	1	x	x					R				Fo, Aq
Giant Kingfisher	<i>Megaceryle maxima</i>		x	x					R				Aq
Chocolate-backed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon badia</i>	2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Grey-headed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x*	AMb				Sa, Cf
Striped Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>							x*	R				
Blue-breasted Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon malimbica</i>	1,3		x					R				Fg, Sa
Woodland Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon senegalensis</i>			x					R				Cf
<b>FALCONIDAE</b>													
Lesser Kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>			x					PM				Gr
Common Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1		x			x		R				Ao
Peregrine Falcon	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>		x						R				Ao
(Fox Kestrel?)	<i>Falco sp. (alopez?)</i>					x		x					
<b>CALYPTOMENIDAE</b>													
African Broadbill	<i>Smithornis capensis</i>	1	x	x					R				Fo
Rufous-sided Broadbill	<i>Smithornis rufofateralis</i>	2							R			GCF	Fo
broadbill sp.	<i>Smithornis sp.</i>							x					
<b>CAMPEPHAGIDAE</b>													
Red-shouldered Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga phoenicea</i>	1	x	x	x				R				Fo
Purple-throated Cuckooshrike	<i>Campephaga quiscalina</i>	1		x		x*			R				Fo
<b>ORIOLIDAE</b>													
Western Black-headed Oriole	<i>Oriolus brachyrhynchus</i>	1,2	x	x		x		x*	R			GCF	Fo
Black-winged Oriole	<i>Oriolus nigripennis</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe, Fg



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<b>PLATYSTEIRIDAE</b>													
Senegal Batis	<i>Batis senegalensis</i>			x				x*	R				Cf
Chestnut Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya castanea</i>	1,2		x					R			GCF	Fo
Red-cheeked Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya blissetti</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x*	R			GCF	Fo, Fe, Cf
Yellow-bellied Wattle-eye	<i>Dyaphorophya concreta</i>	1	x	x		x*	x*		R				Fo, Fe
Common Wattle-eye	<i>Platysteira cyanea</i>	1,2	x	x	x	x*			R				Fg, Fe, Cf
<b>VANGIDAE</b>													
Red-billed Helmetshrike	<i>Prionops caniceps</i>	1,2	x	x					R			GCF	Fo
Shrike Flycatcher	<i>Megabyas flammulatus</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x*	R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Black-and-white Flycatcher	<i>Bias musicus</i>	3				x			R				Cf
<b>MALACONOTIDAE</b>													
Fiery-breasted Bush-shrike	<i>Malaconotus cruentus</i>	1,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Grey-headed Bush-shrike	<i>Malaconotus blanchoti</i>		x						R				Fg
Many-coloured Bush-shrike	<i>Chlorophoneus multicolor</i>	1,2,3							R			GCF	Fo, Fg
Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike	<i>Chlorophoneus sulfureopectus</i>		x						R				Sa
Northern Puffback	<i>Dryoscopus gambensis</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x*	R				Fg
Brown-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra australis</i>	1,3							R				Cf, Fe
Black-crowned Tchagra	<i>Tchagra senegalus</i>	3		x					R				Sa
Sooty Boubou	<i>Laniarius leucorhynchus</i>	1		x					R			GCF	Fe
Tropical Boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus major</i>	1		x				x*	R				Fg
<b>DICRURIDAE</b>													
Square-tailed Drongo	<i>Dicrurus ludwigii</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x*	x*	x*	R				Fg, Fe
Shining Drongo	<i>Dicrurus atripennis</i>	2		x					R			GCF	Fo
Velvet-mantled Drongo	<i>Dicrurus modestus</i>	3		x					R				Cf
<b>LANIIDAE</b>													
Northern Fiscal (Common Fiscal)	<i>Lanius humeralis</i> [L. collaris]	3	x	x					R				Cf
Woodchat Shrike	<i>Lanius senator</i>	1							PM				Gr
<b>CORVIDAE</b>													
Pied Crow	<i>Corvus albus</i>			x					R				Cf
<b>MONARCHIDAE</b>													
Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher	<i>Trochocercus nitens</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
African Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>	1	x	x		x*	x*	x*	R				Fg, Fe
Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>	1,2,3		x		x*		x*	R			GCF	Fo, Fe
<b>EUPETIDAE</b>													
Yellow-headed Picathartes	<i>Picathartes gymnocephalus</i>	1,2	x	x					R	VU	UGF	GCF	Fo
<b>NECTARINIIDAE</b>													
Fraser's Sunbird	<i>Deleornis fraseri</i>	2,3		x			x*		R			GCF	Fo
Green Sunbird	<i>Antheptes rectirostris</i>	2,3							R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Collared Sunbird	<i>Hedydipna collaris</i> [ <i>Anthodiaeta collaris</i> ]	1,3	x	x					R				Cf, Fe
Green-headed Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra verticalis</i>	1		x					R				Fe
Blue-throated Brown Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra cyanae</i>	2,3							R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Olive Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Fo, Fg
Buff-throated Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra adelberti</i>	3							R			GCF	Cf
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	<i>Chalcomitra senegalensis</i>	3							R				Sa

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Olive-bellied Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris chloropygius</i>	1,3		x					R				Cf, Fe
Splendid Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris coccinigastrus</i>							x*	R				
Johanna's Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris johannae</i>	3							R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Superb Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris superbus</i>			x					R			GCF	Fe
Variable Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris venustus</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x*			R				Fg, Cf, Sa
Copper Sunbird	<i>Cinnyris cupreus</i>	3		x					R				Sa
<b>PLOCEIDAE</b>													
Grosbeak Weaver	<i>Amblyospiza albifrons</i>		x	x					R				Cf
Red-headed Quelea	<i>Quelea erythrops</i>	2							AMb				Sa
Yellow-crowned Bishop	<i>Euplectes afer</i>	3							R				Cf
Red-collared Widowbird	<i>Euplectes ardens</i>	1	x				x		R				Gr
Black-winged Bishop	<i>Euplectes hordeaceus</i>	2,3	x				x		R				Sa
Yellow-mantled Widowbird	<i>Euplectes macroura</i>		x						R				Cf
Black-necked Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigricollis</i>	1,3		x	x			x*	R				Fg, Fe, Cf
Village Weaver	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>	3		x					R				Cf
Vieillot's Black Weaver	<i>Ploceus nigerrimus</i>	1,3	x	x					R			GCF	Cf, Sa
Yellow-mantled Weaver	<i>Ploceus tricolor</i>	1							R			GCF	Fo
Compact Weaver	<i>Ploceus superciliosus</i>	3						x*	R				Sa
Preuss's Weaver	<i>Ploceus preussi</i>	1	x	x					R			GCF	Fe
Red-vented Malimbe	<i>Malimbus scutatus</i>	3		x					R			GCF	Fe, Cf
Blue-billed Malimbe	<i>Malimbus nitens</i>	1,3		x				x*	R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Red-headed Malimbe	<i>Malimbus rubricollis</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe, Cf
Crested Malimbe	<i>Malimbus malimbicus</i>	1	x	x		x			R			GCF	Fo
<b>ESTRIDIDAE</b>													
Red-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>			x					R				Cf
Blue-billed Firefinch	<i>Lagonosticta rubricata</i>	3		x					R				Sa
Yellow-winged Pytilia	<i>Pytilia hypogrammica</i>	1							R			SGS	Sa
Dybowski's Twinspot	<i>Euschistospiza dybowski</i>	1	x	x					R			SGS	Sa
Western Bluebill	<i>Spermophaga haematina</i>	3		x				x*	R			GCF	Fe
Orange-cheeked Waxbill	<i>Estrilda melpoda</i>	3							R				Sa
Common Waxbill	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>	1,3		x		x*			R				Sa
Green Twinspot	<i>Mandingoa nitidula</i>			x			x*		R				Fe
Grey-headed Oliveback	<i>Nesocharis capistrata</i>			x					R			SGS	Cf
Chestnut-breasted Negrofinch	<i>Nigrita bicolor</i>	3							R			GCF	Fe
Grey-headed Negrofinch	<i>Nigrita canicapillus</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Fo, Fe, Cf
Bronze Mannikin	<i>Spermestes cucullata</i>			x					R				Sa
Black-and-white Mannikin	<i>Spermestes bicolor</i>	2,3		x					R				Cf, Fe
<b>VIDUIDAE</b>													
Pin-tailed Whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>			x					R				Sa, Cf
indigobird sp.	<i>Vidua</i> sp.					x*			R				
<b>MOTACILLIDAE</b>													
Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	1,2,3		x	x	x*		x*	PM				Gr, Sa, Cf
Plain-backed Pipit	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>			x					R				Gr
Long-billed Pipit	<i>Anthus similis</i>	1	x	x	x		x*		R				Gr
Yellow-throated Longclaw	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>			x					R				Cf



		2008 Survey	Kortenoven	1992 Survey	Field 1972	Glanv. 1951	Serle 1942/46	Bates 1930	Status	IUCN	Rest. Range	Biome	Habitat
Mountain Wagtail	<i>Motacilla clara</i>	1		x			x	x*	R				Fo
Yellow Wagtail	<i>Motacilla flava</i>	3		x				x*	PM				Cf
African Pied Wagtail	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>			x					R				Cf
<b>FRINGILLIDAE</b>													
Yellow-fronted Canary	<i>Crithagra mozambica</i>	1,3		x					R				Sa
<b>EMBERIZIDAE</b>													
Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting	<i>Fringillaria [Emberiza] tahapisi</i>	1,2		x	x	x	x	x*	R				Gr
Ortolan Bunting	<i>Emberiza hortulana</i>	1			x				PM				Gr
<b>HYLIOTIDAE</b>													
Violet-backed Hyliota	<i>Hyliota violacea</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
<b>STENOSTIRIDAE</b>													
Dusky Crested Flycatcher	<i>Elminia nigromitrata</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo, Fg
African Blue Flycatcher	<i>Elminia longicauda</i>	1	x	x	x				R				Fg
<b>PARIDAE</b>													
White-shouldered Black Tit	<i>Melaniparus [Parus] guineensis</i>							x*	R				
Dusky Tit	<i>Melaniparus [Parus] funereus</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
<b>NICATORIDAE</b>													
Western Nicator	<i>Nicator chloris</i>	1,3	x	x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe
<b>ALAUDIDAE</b>													
Rufous-naped Lark	<i>Mirafra africana</i>	1		x					R				Gr
<b>MACROSPHENIDAE</b>													
Green Crombec	<i>Sylvietta virens</i>	1,3	x	x					R			GCF	Cf, Fe
Lemon-bellied Crombec	<i>Sylvietta denti</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe
African Moustached Warbler	<i>Melocichla mentalis</i>	1,3				x*			R				Sa
Kemp's Longbill	<i>Macrosphenus kempii</i>	1,2,3							R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Grey Longbill	<i>Macrosphenus concolor</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe
<b>CISTICOLIDAE</b>													
Senegal Eremomela	<i>Eremomela pusilla</i>	2,3							R			SGS	Sa
Rufous-crowned Erememela	<i>Eremomela badiceps</i>	1,2,3		x			x*		R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Sierra Leone Prinia	<i>Schistolais leontica</i>	1	x	x					R	VU	UGF	GCF	Fe
Yellow-breasted Apalis	<i>Apalis flavida</i>	1		x	x				R				Fg
Black-capped Apalis	<i>Apalis nigriceps</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Sharpe's Apalis	<i>Apalis sharpii</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Grey-backed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x*	R				Cf, Fe
Yellow-browed Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera supercilialis</i>	3	x	x					R			GCF	Fe
Olive-green Camaroptera	<i>Camaroptera chloronota</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Oriole Warbler	<i>Hypergerus atriceps</i>			x					R			SGS	Fe
Red-faced Cisticola	<i>Cisticola erythrops</i>	3						x	R				Sa, Cf
Singing Cisticola	<i>Cisticola cantans</i>	3		x					R				Sa
Whistling Cisticola	<i>Cisticola lateralis</i>	2,3						x*	R				Sa, Cf
Rock-loving Cisticola	<i>Cisticola aberrans</i>	1,2		x			x*		R				Gr
Croaking Cisticola	<i>Cisticola natalensis</i>			x					R				Gr
Short-winged Cisticola	<i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>	3							R				Sa, Gr
Black-backed Cisticola	<i>Cisticola eximius</i>	1							R				Gr
Black-headed Rufous Warbler	<i>Bathmocercus cerviniventris</i>	3							R	NT	UGF	GCF	Cf, Fe

		2008 Survey	Kortenhoven	1992 Survey	Field 1972	Glanv. 1951	Serle 1942/46	Bates 1930	Status	IUCN	Rest. Range	Biome	Habitat
Tawny-flanked Prinia	<i>Prinia subflava</i>	2,3	x						R				Sa, Cf
Red-winged Warbler	<i>Prinia erythroptera</i> [ <i>Heliolais erythropterus</i> ]	3	x						R				Sa
<b>LOCUSTELLIDAE</b>													
Broad-tailed Warbler	<i>Schoenicola brevirostris</i>		x			x*			R				Gr
<b>ACROCEPHALIDAE</b>													
Melodious Warbler	<i>Hippolais polyglotta</i>	1,2,3		x					PM				Fg, Cf
Sedge Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus schoenobaenus</i>	3							PM				Cf
European Reed Warbler	<i>Acrocephalus scirpaceus</i>	3							PM				Cf
<b>HIRUNDINIDAE</b>													
Square-tailed Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne nitens</i>	2,3	x	x			x*		R			GCF	Ao
Fanti Saw-wing	<i>Psalidoprocne obscura</i>	1,2,3		x		x		x*	R				Ao
Common House Martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	1		x					PM				Ao
Preuss's Cliff Swallow	<i>Petrochelidon preussi</i>	1,2							R				Ao
Lesser Striped Swallow	<i>Cecropis abyssinica</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Ao
Red-rumped Swallow	<i>Cecropis daurica domicella</i>	1,2,3		x		x			AMb				Ao
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>			x					PM				Ao
Red-chested Swallow	<i>Hirundo lucida</i>	1							R				Gr
Rock Martin	<i>Ptyonoprogne fuligula</i>		x	x					R				Gr
Common Sand Martin	<i>Riparia riparia</i>	1,2		x					PM				Ao
<b>PYCNONOTIDAE</b>													
Slender-billed Greenbul	<i>Stelgidillas gracilirostris</i>	1,2,3	x			x*			R				Fo, Fe, Fg
Red-tailed Bristlebill	<i>Bleda syndactylus</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Grey-headed Bristlebill	<i>Bleda canicapillus</i>	1,2,3	x						R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Yellow-throated Leaflove	<i>Atimastillas flavicollis</i>	1	x						R				Fg
Swamp Palm Bulbul	<i>Thescelocichla leucopleura</i>	3	x	x					R			GCF	Cf, Fe
Honeyguide Greenbul	<i>Baeopogon indicator</i>	1,2,3		x				x	R			GCF	Fo, Fg
Simple Leaflove	<i>Chlorocichla simplex</i>	1,2,3	x						R			GCF	Cf, Fe
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	<i>Eurillas latirostris</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Fo, Fg
Little Greenbul	<i>Eurillas virens</i>	1,2,3	x	x				x*	R				Cf, Fe
Little Grey Greenbul	<i>Eurillas gracilis</i>	3		x		x*			R			GCF	Fe
Ansorge's Greenbul	<i>Eurillas ansorgei</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Cameroon Sombre Greenbul	<i>Eurillas curvirostris</i>	3							R			GCF	Fo
Western Bearded Greenbul	<i>Criniger barbatus</i>	1,2,3		x			x*	x*	R			GCF	Fo
Red-tailed Greenbul	<i>Criniger calurus</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Yellow-bearded Greenbul	<i>Criniger olivaceus</i>			x					R	VU	UGF	GCF	Fo
Icterine Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus icterinus</i>	1	x	x			x*		R			GCF	Fo
White-throated Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus albigularis</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo, Fg
Baumann's Greenbul	<i>Phyllastrephus baumanni</i>	1,3							R			GCF	Fe, Cf
Leaflove	<i>Phyllastrephus scandens</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x*		x*	R			GCF	Fg, Fo
Common Bulbul	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>	1,2,3		x		x*	x	x*	R				Cf, Sa, Fe
<b>PHYLLOSCOPIDAE</b>													
Wood Warbler	<i>Rhadina</i> [ <i>Phylloscopus</i> ] <i>sibilatrix</i>	1,2	x	x					PM				Fe
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	1,2,3		x				x*	PM				Sa, Fe



		2008 Survey	Kortenhoven	1992 Survey	Field 1972	Glanv. 1951	Serie 1942/46	Bates 1930	Status	IUCN	Rest. Range	Biome	Habitat
<b>INCERTAE SEDIS</b>													
Green Hylia	<i>Hylia prasina</i>	1,2,3		x		x		x	R			GCF	Fo, Fe, Fg
Tit-hylia	<i>Pholidomis rushiae</i>	1							R			GCF	Fo, Fe
<b>SYLVIIDAE</b>													
Blackcap	<i>Sylvia atricapilla</i>	1,2,3	x	x			x*	x*	PM				Fg, Fe, Cf
Garden Warbler	<i>Sylvia borin</i>	1,3		x			x*		PM				Fe
<b>ZOSTEROPIDAE</b>													
Yellow White-eye	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>	1,2,3	x	x	x		x*	x	R				Fe, Fg, Cf
<b>PELLORNEIDAE</b>													
Brown Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis fulvescens</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fe
Pale-breasted Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis rufipennis</i>	2		x				x*	R				Fo
Blackcap Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis cleaveri</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Puvel's Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis puveli</i>	1,2,3		x					R			GCF	Fg, Fe
Rufous-winged Illadopsis	<i>Illadopsis rufescens</i>	1,2,3		x			x*	x*	R	NT	UGF	GCF	Fo
<b>LEIOTRICHIDAE</b>													
Capuchin Babbler	<i>Phyllanthus atripennis</i>	1	x	x		x*			R			GCF	Fe, Cf
Brown Babbler	<i>Turdoides pledejus</i>	1							R				Fe
<b>SITTIDAE</b>													
African Spotted Creeper	<i>Salpomis salvadori</i> [S. spilnotus]							x*	R				
<b>STURNIDAE</b>													
Forest Chestnut-winged Starling	<i>Onychognathus fulgidus</i>	3		x					R			GCF	Fo
Narrow-tailed Starling	<i>Poeoptera lugubris</i>							x* +	R				
Splendid Glossy Starling	<i>Lamprotornis splendidus</i>	3		x					AMb				Fe, Cf
Emerald Starling	<i>Lamprotornis iris</i>	3						x*	R	DD		SGS	Sa
Violet-backed Starling	<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>	1,3	x	x				x*	AMb				Sa
Copper-tailed Glossy Starling	<i>Hylopsar cupreocauda</i>	3		x					R	NT	UGF	GCF	Fo, Fe
<b>MUSCICAPIDAE</b>													
<b>Muscicapinae</b>													
White-tailed Alethe	<i>Alethe diademata</i>	1,2,3	x	x			x*	x*	R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Forest Scrub Robin	<i>Cercotrichas leucosticta</i>	1,2,3		x					R				Fo
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>			x					PM				Fg
Ashy Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa caerulescens</i>	3				x*			R				Fe
Cassin's Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa cassini</i>		x	x					R			GCF	Fo
Little Grey Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa epulata</i>	1		x					R			GCF	Fo
Dusky-blue Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa comitata</i>	3		x					R			GCF	Cf
Ussher's Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa ussheri</i>	1		x					R		UGF	GCF	Fe, Fo
White-browed Forest Flycatcher	<i>Fraseria cinerascens</i>			x					R			GCF	Fo
Northern Black Flycatcher	<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>	2							R				Fg
<b>Cossyphinae</b>													
Snowy-crowned Robin Chat	<i>Cossypha niveicapilla</i>	1							R				Fo, Fg
Blue-shouldered Robin Chat	<i>Cossypha cyanocampter</i>			x					R				Cf, Fe
Brown-chested Alethe	<i>Chamaetylas poliocephala</i>	1,2		x			x	x*	R				Fo, Fe
Lowland Akalat	<i>Sheppardia cyornithopsis</i>	1,2		x		x*	x*		R			GCF	Fo, Fe
Grey-winged Akalat	<i>Sheppardia polioptera</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x*	x*		R				Fo, Fg

		2008 Survey	Kortenhoven	1992 Survey	Field 1972	Glanv. 1951	Serie 1942/46	Bates 1930	Status	IUCN	Rest. Range	Biome	Habitat
Forest Robin	<i>Stiphornis erythrorhox</i>	1,2,3		x				x*	R			GCF	Fo
<b>Saxicolinae</b>													
Common Nightingale	<i>Luscinia megarhynchos</i>	1,3							PM				Cf, Fe
Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>	1,2,3		x		x*		x	PM				Fg, Sa
Common Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola saxatilis</i>	1	x		x				PM				Gr
Blue Rock Thrush	<i>Monticola solitarius</i>				x				PM				Gr
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	1,3	x	x				x	PM				Gr, Cf, Sa
African Stonechat	<i>Saxicola torquatus</i>	1	x	x		x*	x*	x*	R				Gr
<b>TURDIDAE</b>													
White-tailed Ant Thrush	<i>Neocossyphus poensis</i>	2,3		x				x*	R			GCF	Fo
Finsch's Flycatcher Thrush	<i>Stizorhina (fraseri) finschi</i>	1,2,3		x				x*	R			GCF	Fo
Grey Ground Thrush	<i>Geokichla princei</i>	1		x					R			GCF	Fo
African Thrush	<i>Turdus pelios</i>	1,2,3	x	x		x	x		R				Fg, Fe
Totals		257	101	243	12	59	35	68		16	9	GCF=123 SGS=6	
339													

**Appendix 2.** Bird species mist-netted in the Loma Mountains, Sierra Leone, 14 February–2 March 2008.

**Annexe 2.** Espèces d’oiseaux capturées dans des filets japonais dans les Monts Loma, Sierra Leone, 14 février–2 mars 2008.

Species			Altitude		
			1,300 m	750 m	400 m
1	White-bellied Kingfisher	<i>Corythornis leucogaster</i>		1	
2	Chocolate-backed Kingfisher	<i>Halcyon badia</i>		1	
3	Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher	<i>Terpsiphone rufiventer</i>	2		
4	Olive Sunbird	<i>Cyanomitra olivacea</i>		1	1
5	Tree Pipit	<i>Anthus trivialis</i>	2		
6	Red-tailed Bristlebill	<i>Bleda syndactylus</i>		1	
7	Yellow-whiskered Greenbul	<i>Eurillas latirostris</i>	1	2	1
8	Little Greenbul	<i>Eurillas virens</i>		2	1
9	White-tailed Alethe	<i>Alethe diademata</i>		1	2
10	Brown-chested Alethe	<i>Chamaetylas poliocephala</i>		3	
11	Lowland Akalat	<i>Sheppardia cyornithopsis</i>		1	
12	Forest Robin	<i>Stiphornis erythrorhox</i>			1
13	Pied Flycatcher	<i>Ficedula hypoleuca</i>		1	
Totals			5	14	6



# An overlooked population of White-collared Oliveback *Nesocharis ansorgei*, in Angola

Michael S. L. Mills<sup>a,b</sup> and Pedro Vaz Pinto<sup>c,d</sup>

**Uma população previamente desconhecida de asa-verde-de-colar-branco *Nesocharis ansorgei* em Angola.** Aqui reportamos avistamentos de asa-verde-de-colar-branco *Nesocharis ansorgei* em três locais distintos no bloco norte das florestas de escarpa de Angola. Esta população anteriormente negligenciada está a mais de 1.500 km de distância da sua mancha de distribuição conhecida ao redor do Albertine Rift. Também demonstramos que, ao contrário do que consta em guias de campo, ambos os sexos possuem um colar branco, e de espessura uniforme ao longo da sua extensão.

Olivebacks *Nesocharis* are a genus of African finch comprising three species. Shelley's Oliveback *N. shelleyi* is confined to highland forests and forest edge in south-east Nigeria, south-west Cameroon and the island of Bioko (Equatorial Guinea), whereas White-collared Oliveback *N. ansorgei* is endemic to montane forest edge and swamps in the Albertine Rift and surrounding areas of eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and north-west Tanzania. In both species the male has an olive breast, whereas the female has uniform grey underparts. The third species, Grey-headed Oliveback *N. capistrata*, occurs in mesic savannas north of the Guinea-Congo forest zone, from western Uganda to Guinea-Bissau. No species of oliveback has been recorded south of the Congo Basin (Fry & Keith 2004).

On 29 August 2011 MSLM was leading a bird tour for Birding Africa, which had set up camp 7 km south of Quibaxi (08°30'22"S 14°34'59"E) in Kwanza Norte province, Angola, at 980 m altitude. Walking the edge of some nearby secondary forest, they encountered a party of four olivebacks perched in some vine tangles. This came as a great surprise since no oliveback species had previously been recorded in Angola (Dean 2000). Based on plumage characteristics noted at the time, they were either Shelley's Oliveback, White-collared Oliveback or a new species. Only the female was seen well; white markings on the neck-sides were thought to be most similar to those in male Shelley's Oliveback.

Several weeks later, in September 2011, M. Lilje & D. Hoddinott, while leading a tour for Rockjumper Tours, found three olivebacks in secondary forest 10 km south-west of Quitexe (07°56'36"S 15°02'25"E) at c.790 m altitude,

which they, unaware of the previous sighting, reported as a new species for Angola and perhaps as a new species to science ([www.wildlifeextra.com/go/news/oliveback-angola.html#cr](http://www.wildlifeextra.com/go/news/oliveback-angola.html#cr); D. Hoddinott in *Bull. ABC* 19: 94). They noted that the birds most closely resembled White-collared Oliveback, although the tail appeared longer and the white collar extended onto the back of the neck, contrary to illustrations of this species in Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002) and Sinclair & Ryan (2010) (D. Hoddinott in *litt.* 2011).

In October 2011 and August 2012 MSLM again observed these olivebacks at the first site, near Quibaxi, but on neither occasion was the observation sufficiently prolonged to enable a detailed study of the plumage. Then, on 27 September 2013, K. D. Dijkstra, unaware of the previous observations, reported a family of four olivebacks at forest edge near Uige town (07°36'44"S 14°57'48"E), just above 800 m, which he tentatively identified as White-collared Oliveback.

Finally, on 21 May 2014, we returned to the original location near Quibaxi. This time we located a family of four olivebacks feeding in grass beside a track. We spent c.5 minutes observing them at close range and at different angles through a telescope, and PVP obtained a series of photographs (Figs. 1–6). Detailed study revealed that the white collars were of equal width around the entire head, although they could appear wider at the sides depending on how the head was held. Furthermore, both sexes possessed complete white collars. Based on information in Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002), Fry & Keith (2004) and Sinclair & Ryan (2010), these birds did not match any species of oliveback.



**Figures 1–6.** Female White-collared Oliveback *Nesocharis ansorgei*, 7 km south of Quibaxi, Kwanza Norte province, Angola, 21 May 2014; note how the white collar is complete but appears broader in different sections depending on how the head is held (Pedro Vaz Pinto)

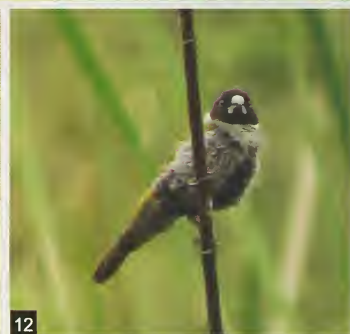
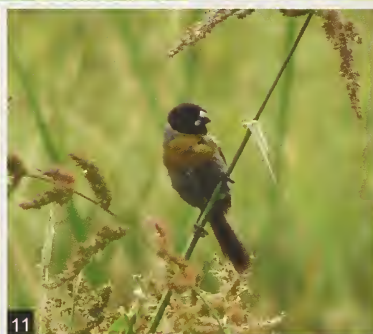
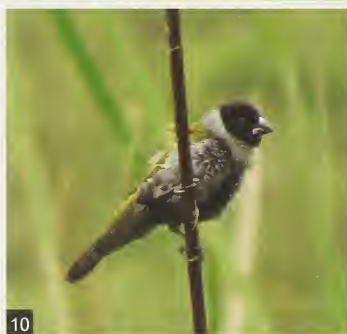
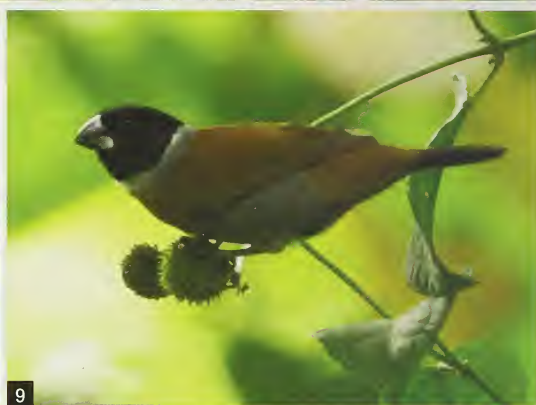
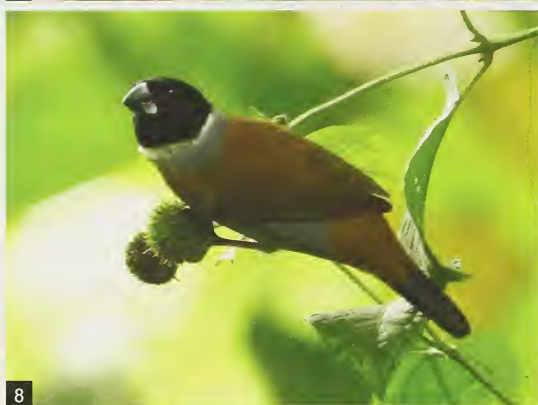
**Figuras 1–6.** Fêmea de asa-verde-de-colar-branca *Nesocharis ansorgei*, 7 km a sul de Quibaxe, província do Kwanza-Norte, Angola, 21 de maio de 2014; de notar como o collar branco é completo mas aparece mais espesso em diferentes secções conforme a posição da cabeça (Pedro Vaz Pinto)

This led us to search the internet for photographs of White-collared Oliveback (e.g. Figs. 7–12). These demonstrate that, depending on the angle at which the head is held, the white collar can appear broader at the base or sides of the neck, and that both sexes possess a complete white collar. As most museum specimens are prepared with their heads pointing forward, this probably makes the white collar appear broader between the breast and head than elsewhere along its circumference (Fig. 13–14). This would explain the illustrations in Stevenson & Fanshawe (2002), Fry & Keith (2004) and Sinclair & Ryan (2010). The photographs also demonstrate that the pattern of the collar observed in the Angolan

birds is well within the range displayed in White-collared Oliveback.

We therefore present these observations and photographs as the first records of White-collared Oliveback in Angola, a species known previously only from >1,500 km away in eastern DRC. The three Angolan localities at which the species has been recorded are located at 790–980 m altitude, suggesting that the species may be comparatively widespread over the northern escarpment zone in secondary forest and forest edge, i.e. similar habitats to East Africa, albeit at slightly lower altitudes (Fry & Keith 2004). The only other species to show a similar, disjunct distribution is Dusky Twinspot *Euschistospiza cinereovinacea*, which is represented





**Figures 7–12.** White-collared Olivebacks *Nesocharis ansorgei* photographed in Uganda and Rwanda; note the complete white collar in both sexes and how variable the thickness of the collar appears between the breast and the head depending on how the latter is held (Fig. 7: Jonas Rosquist; Figs. 8–9: Adam Scott Kennedy; Figs. 10–12: Jason Anderson)

**Figuras 7–12.** Asas-verde-de-colar-branco *Nesocharis ansorgei*, fotografados no Uganda e Rwanda; de notar o collar branco completo em ambos os sexos e como parece variável a espessura do collar entre o peito e a cabeça, dependendo de como esta última se posiciona (Fig. 7: Jonas Rosquist; Figs. 8–9: Adam Scott Kennedy; Figs. 10–12: Jason Anderson)



**Figures 13–14.** Male Shelley’s Oliveback *Nesocharis shelleyi* (above) and White-collared Oliveback *N. ansorgei* (below) specimens; note how much broader the white collar appears above the breast of the latter species, compared to along the rest of its circumference (© Natural History Museum, London)

**Figuras 13–14.** Exemplos de macho de asa-verde-de-Shelley *Nesocharis shelleyi* (em cima) e de asa-verde-de-colar-branco *N. ansorgei* (em baixo); de notar o quão mais largo é o colar branco acima do peito na última espécie, comparado com a sua aparência ao redor da circunferência (© Natural History Museum, London)

by endemic *E. c. cinereovinacea* in Angola and *E. c. graueri* in the Albertine Rift.

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# An Albertine Rift endemic in western Africa: first record of White-collared Oliveback *Nesocharis ansorgei* for Congo-Brazzaville

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**Un endémique du Rift albertin en Afrique de l'Ouest : première observation du Dos-vert à collier *Nesocharis ansorgei* au Congo-Brazzaville.** Le 14 février 2014, trois Dos-verts à collier *Nesocharis ansorgei* mâles ont été photographiés à Bilinga, au sud-ouest du Congo-Brazzaville. C'est la première donnée pour le pays, d'une espèce qui n'était connue que du Rift albertin, avant sa découverte récente au nord de l'Angola.

On 14 February 2014 at 08.45 hrs, VD-P observed a small group of three estrildid finches at Bilinga, a few kilometres south of Dimonika Biosphere Reserve, Kouilou Department, south-west Congo-Brazzaville (04°28.988'S 12°14.850'E). Having visited Bilinga regularly over the previous three years during preparatory work for a photographic guide to the birds of the Kouilou area (Gonzalez-Dunia *et al.* 2014), he immediately realised that the species was one unknown to him and therefore suspected that it must be uncommon. The birds were perched in a tree on a hillside opposite Bilinga station, near the banks of the Loémé River; VD-P

was able to watch them for c.5 minutes and took several photographs (Figs. 1–2). The head was all black separated by a narrow white collar from the grey hindneck and yellowish-olive breast. The upperparts were yellow-olive with a yellower rump and uppertail-coverts; the rest of the underparts were soft grey. The tail was black.

After consulting a field guide (Borrow & Demey 2008) and JMI, it was discovered that the only species corresponding to the birds were olivebacks *Nesocharis*, of which only two species were known from western Africa: Grey-headed *N. capistrata* and Shelley's Oliveback *N. shelleyi*, neither of which had been recorded in Congo-Brazzaville



**Figures 1–2.** Male White-collared Olivebacks *Nesocharis ansorgei*, Bilinga, Congo-Brazzaville, 14 February 2014 (Vincent Delhay-Prat)

Dos-verts à collier *Nesocharis ansorgei* mâles, Bilinga, Congo-Brazzaville, 14 février 2014 (Vincent Delhay-Prat)

(Fry *et al.* 2004, Borrow & Demey 2008, Dowsett *et al.* 2014). Given that only the latter species has an entirely black head, with the rest of the plumage also being similar to the Bilinga birds, we concluded that they were probably Shelley's Olivebacks, which is restricted to the highlands of south-east Nigeria and south-west Cameroon, and on Bioko. However, Shelley's Oliveback possesses just a short white stripe on the neck-sides and a short tail, imparting a dumpy 'jizz', as illustrated in a recent photograph in Mills (2010), whereas the Bilinga birds had a complete white collar and a longer tail. Subsequent circulation of the photographs revealed that they were in fact White-collared Olivebacks *N. ansorgei*—a new species for Congo-Brazzaville. Curiously, all three birds had a yellowish-olive breast and were therefore males.

Interestingly, the species, which was previously known only from the Albertine Rift area in East Africa, has recently also been discovered in northern Angola (Mills & Vaz Pinto 2015). The three Angolan localities were at 790–980 m altitude, notably higher than the birds in Congo, as Bilinga is at just c.30 m altitude. It is, however, located within the forested Mayombe massif, where the tops lie at 670–760 m (Dowsett-Lemaire 2001) and several hills near Bilinga reach c.250 m. Of note is that nearby Dimonika Biosphere Reserve, one of Congo-Brazzaville's six Important Bird Areas, contains a small population of two montane species, Crossley's Ground Thrush *Geokichla* (= *Zoothera*) *crossleyi* and Pink-footed Puffback *Dryoscopus angolensis* (Dowsett-Lemaire 2001). It would be interesting to discover if White-collared Oliveback occurs at additional

sites between south-west Congo-Brazzaville and northern Angola.

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# House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* and hybrids with Somali Sparrow *P. castanopterus* in Ethiopia

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**Le Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus* et des hybrides avec le Moineau de Somalie *P. castanopterus* en Éthiopie.** Des nouvelles observations sont rapportées du Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus* en Éthiopie, indiquant qu'une extension de son aire de distribution est en cours. Au nord-ouest, les oiseaux appartiennent à la sous-espèce *P. d. rufidorsalis*, tandis que dans le nord-est et le sud ils appartiennent à *P. d. indicus*. À Megado, près de la frontière avec le Kenya, un mâle hybride *P. d. indicus* × Moineau de Somalie *P. castanopterus* a été photographié. L'origine des Moineaux domestiques en Éthiopie est examinée.

**Summary.** New records of House Sparrows *Passer domesticus* in Ethiopia are reported, indicating an ongoing range extension. In the north-west, birds were *P. d. rufidorsalis*, whilst in the north-east and south they were *P. d. indicus*. At Megado, near the Kenyan border, a hybrid *P. d. indicus* × Somali Sparrow *P. castanopterus* was photographed. The origin of the House Sparrows in Ethiopia is discussed.

The ubiquitous House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* has been introduced by man in many parts of the world, including in Africa, from where it has subsequently spread, often followed by hybridisation with other local *Passer* species (Summers-Smith 1998, 2009). In the Horn of Africa, it is known from Eritrea (*P. d. rufidorsalis*) and Djibouti and southern Somalia (*P. d. indicus*), but there are no previously published records from Ethiopia (Ash & Miskell 1998, Ash & Atkins 2009). Here we present our observations of House Sparrows in Ethiopia in 2012–14 and discuss its current status in the country.

## North-west Ethiopia

On 15 January 2012, ME & FR observed four pairs of House Sparrows in Humera, Tigray Regional State, on the border with Eritrea and c.7 km west of the border with Sudan (14°17'10"N 36°36'34"E; Fig. 1). A year later, on 4 February 2013, the species appeared to have spread throughout the town and was repeatedly encountered in large flocks of up to 30 in its centre. They were seen feeding on the ground, perching on walls and were heard in the roofs of houses. No evidence of breeding was noted.

## Southern Ethiopia

On 23 May 2013, KG & TT found at least four pairs at Megado, south-west of Mega, Oromia Regional State, near the Kenyan border (03°53'45"N 38°13'18"E). A female was observed leaving a nest in the roof of a hut and two males were observed closely. One had a brown

back, an all-grey crown and a back pattern typical of *P. d. indicus* (Fig. 2), whilst the other had a grey back, a brown forehead with a grey central crown, but no yellowish on the underparts, suggesting hybridisation with Somali Sparrow *P. castanopterus* (Fig. 3), presumably of the subspecies *fulgens* given its known range (Summers-Smith 1988). Interestingly, this individual strikingly resembles the putative hybrid House × Somali Sparrows from Somaliland depicted by Cohen & Mills (2010), although these were most probably hybrids between *P. d. indicus* and nominate Somali



**Figure 1.** Male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus rufidorsalis*, Humera, north-west Ethiopia, 15 January 2012 (Mihret Ewnetu)

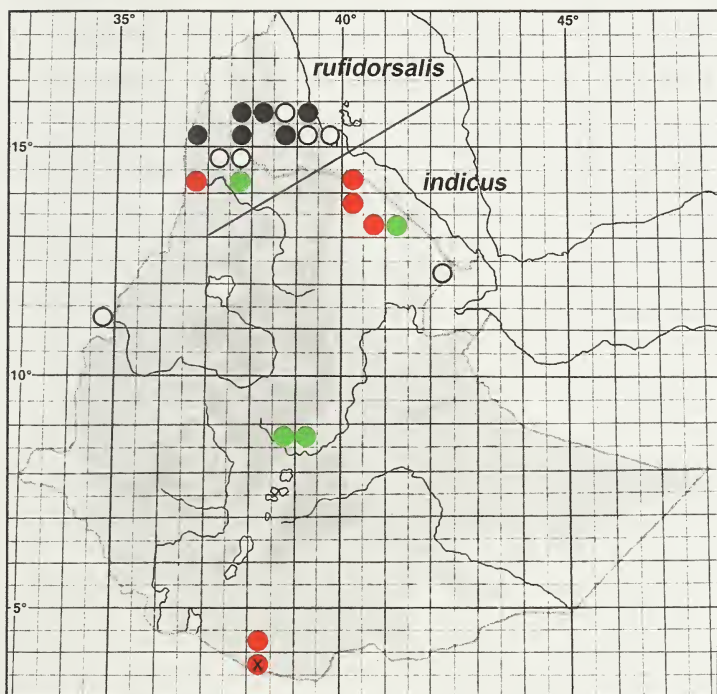
Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus rufidorsalis* mâle, Humera, Éthiopie du nord-ouest, 15 janvier 2012 (Mihret Ewnetu)



**Figure 2.** Male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus indicus*, Megado, southern Ethiopia, 23 May 2013 (Kai Gedeon)  
 Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus indicus* mâle, Megado, Éthiopie du sud, 23 mai 2013 (Kai Gedeon)

**Figure 3.** Hybrid male House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* × Somali Sparrow *P. castanopterus*, Megado, southern Ethiopia, 23 May 2013; note the grey back (Kai Gedeon)

Hybride Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus* × Moineau de Somalie *P. castanopterus*, mâle, Megado, Éthiopie du sud, 23 mai 2013 ; noter le dos gris (Kai Gedeon)



**Figure 4.** Map of House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* records in Ethiopia and Eritrea. White dots: confirmed sight records mentioned in Ash & Atkins (2009); black dots: confirmed breeding records mentioned in Ash & Atkins (2009); red dots: records documented in this paper; red dot with x: hybrid *P. domesticus indicus* × *P. castanopterus fulgens*; green dots: other records mentioned in this paper.

Mentions du Moineau domestique *Passer domesticus* en Éthiopie et en Érythrée. Points blancs : observations confirmées mentionnées par Ash & Atkins (2009) ; points noirs : nidifications confirmées mentionnées par Ash & Atkins (2009) ; points rouges : observations documentées dans le présent article ; point rouge avec x : hybride *P. domesticus indicus* × *P. castanopterus fulgens* ; points verts : autres observations mentionnées dans le présent article.

Sparrow. Next day, on 24 May 2013, at least one pair of House Sparrows was seen entering a nest in the roof of a hut in Dubluk, a small settlement

between Mega and Yabello, Oromia Regional State (04°21'58"N 38°16'46"E).



## North-east Ethiopia

On 11–15 November 2013, AC observed >15 House Sparrows, including adult males and females, c.8 km west of Dallol, Afar Regional State (14°13'56"N 40°13'30"E). No evidence of breeding was noted. The birds were in a mining camp constructed c.10 years previously on the edge of a vast saltpan that apparently does not support any life, although there are small settlements along the pan that could serve as stepping stones. On 14 February 2014, RS observed c.25 birds in a former hospital complex, now a dilapidated military base, in nearby Kursod (13°26'48"N 40°30'37"E). At Hamadela salt camp (14°05'08"N 40°16'46"E), a pair was seen feeding two fledglings near Hotel Afarik on 16–18 February 2014, and on 18th another ten were sighted at Bir Haile (13°51'52"N 40°01'22"E).

## Discussion

The current range expansion of the House Sparrow in the Horn of Africa is a consequence of several independent man-assisted colonisation events involving the subspecies *indicus* and *rufidorsalis*. The spread of these different populations is accompanied by local hybridisation with the two Somali Sparrow subspecies *castanopterus* and *fulgens*. House Sparrows were unknown in Eritrea until 1995, when they were found breeding in several places. During the following years, a large part of the country became populated by *P. d. rufidorsalis* (Ash & Atkins 2009; Fig. 4). In Sudan, near the Ethiopian border, there was undated proof at 11°S (Nikolaus 1987). Its arrival in Djibouti during 1999 was apparently unconnected with the establishment of the Sudanese and Eritrean populations (Ash & Atkins 2009) as it concerns *P. d. indicus*, which also occurs on the Red Sea coast of Arabia (Jennings 2010) and in Somalia (Ash & Miskell 1988). This native Asian subspecies also occurs in Kenya and further south (Lewis & Pomeroy 1989). *P. d. indicus* is reported to hybridise with Somali Sparrow *P. c. castanopterus* in Somalia (Ash & Colston 1981) as well as in Djibouti and Somaliland (Borrow 2010, Cohen & Mills 2010, Redman 2012).

According to Ash & Atkins (2009), House Sparrows had not reached Ethiopia by that time. However, since then some unpublished records have been brought to our attention. In central Ethiopia, J. M. Wambura (*in litt.* 2014) observed

several pairs in Addis Ababa in 2007 and in Adama, Nazret, in 2008. M. Gabremichael (*in litt.* 2014) encountered the species c.5 years ago at Afdera, in the northern Afar depression (13°15'00"N 41°00'00"E), and more than seven years ago at Shiraro, Tigray (14°23'45"N 37°46'23"E), as well as between Berahile (13°51'53"N 40°01'27"E) and Dallol, Afar. In June 2011, it was found in the vicinity of Humera, Tigray (14°17'10"N 36°36'34"E) without more precise information concerning the locality (A. Ahmed pers. comm.). Furthermore, there is a recent observation from the Ghion Hotel, in the centre of Addis Ababa (09°00'48"N 38°45'40"E), unfortunately without further details (M. Gabremichael *in litt.* 2014).

The House Sparrows we observed in north-west Ethiopia were of the subspecies *rufidorsalis* (Fig. 1), identified by the extensive amount of chestnut on the back, whilst those in the north-east and the south were much less intensively coloured on the upperparts, typical of *P. d. indicus* (Fig. 2).

Contrary to expectations, the House Sparrows in the Afar depression were of the subspecies *indicus*, and not *rufidorsalis* like those in Eritrea (Ash & Atkins 2009), although the Eritrean border is <20 km away. Consequently, Djibouti (350 km away) must be questioned as the starting point of an independent range extension. Instead, nearby port cities in Eritrea should also be considered, as *indicus* might have settled there in recent years. However, Humera, in westernmost Tigray, is populated by *rufidorsalis*, as is probably Shiraro. For the time being, we conclude that the current boundary between the two subspecies runs through northern Ethiopia (Fig. 4).

The hybrid *P. d. indicus* × *P. c. fulgens* photographed at Megado (Fig. 3) appears to be the first record of a hybrid between these two taxa, while the observations of nests at the same locality and at Dubluk are, to our knowledge, the first breeding records of House Sparrow in Ethiopia.

We can only speculate about the origin of those House Sparrows in southern Ethiopia. Anecdotal observations indicate that their recent range extension in Kenya occurred along the main road connecting Mombasa to the Ugandan capital Kampala (Martin *et al.* 2013, Schrey *et al.* 2014). The localities in southern Ethiopia lie c.500 km from this main dispersal event and c.380 km from a locality in northern Kenya where

the species has been known for some years. In August 1999, N. Redman (*in litt.* 2014) found three House Sparrows (judged to be *indicus*) at Kapedo, c.50 km north of Lake Baringo (01°11'00"N 36°06'09"E). They were with a small flock of Somali Sparrows. In subsequent years, the birds were seen there again, together with hybrids. Based on distribution, the latter could easily have also been hybrids between *P. d. indicus* and *P. c. fulgens*. Therefore, colonisation of southern Ethiopia from Kenya appears possible. Alternatively, it is also conceivable that colonisation occurred from the north, via the Rift Valley and starting in Djibouti.

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# First records of South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* for Ghana

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**Premières observations du Labbe de McCormick *Stercorarius maccormicki* au Ghana.** Plusieurs grands labbes on été observés pendant des inventaires de faune maritime au large du Ghana en mai 2013 et avril 2014. À trois occasions les oiseaux ont été photographiés et identifiés comme des Labbes de McCormick *Stercorarius maccormicki*. Il s'agit des premières données confirmées pour le Ghana. Les dates de ces observations en deux années consécutives indiquent que les Labbes de McCormick traversent le Golfe de Guinée lors de leur migration vers le nord.

During 18 April–31 May 2013 and 26 March–26 May 2014, marine fauna observations were undertaken in Ghanaian waters on board a geophysical survey vessel. The survey areas were located 45–65 km off the Ghanaian coast in 2013 and 20–80 km off the Ghanaian coast in 2014, in which year the survey also entered the waters of Côte d'Ivoire (Fig. 1). During these studies, four large skuas *Stercorarius* sp. were observed.

On 12 May 2013 at 07:57 hrs, JTS observed a large skua (skua 1) circling the vessel c.59 km from the Ghanaian coast (04°31'52"N 03°08'09"W). Aware of the complexity of identifying members of this genus to species level, he concentrated

on obtaining some photographs (Figs. 2–3). The weather was fine with slight cloud cover, facilitating good visibility in excess of 5 km. Wind was eight knots from the south and as a result Beaufort sea state was three with a low swell (<2 m). The sea surface temperature (SST) was 30.1°C and the water depth at this location was 1,345 m.

Another large skua (skua 2) was observed by JTS on 26 May, at 18:03 hrs, 60.7 km from the coast. Due to low light levels the photographs do not show any clear identification features.

Almost a year later, on 25 April 2014 at 11:01 hrs, MdB observed a large skua (skua 3) briefly circling the vessel c.60 km from the Ghanaian



**Figure 1.** Map showing the study area off Ghana and the positions of the large skuas observed in 2013 (skuas 1–2) and 2014 (skuas 3–5). Skuas 1, 3 and 4 were subsequently identified as South Polar Skuas *Stercorarius maccormicki*.

Carte indiquant la zone d'étude au large du Ghana et les positions des grands labbes observés en 2013 (labbes 1–2) et 2014 (labbes 3–5). Labbes 1, 3 et 4 ont par la suite été identifiés comme des Labbes de McCormick *Stercorarius maccormicki*.



**Figures 2–3.** South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki* (skua 1), off Ghana, 12 May 2013 (James T. Saulino)  
 Labbe de McCormick *Stercorarius maccormicki* (labbe 1), au large du Ghana, 12 mai 2013 (James T. Saulino)

coast (04°32'13"N 03°09'18"W). The bird landed on the water near a patch of *Sargassum natans* algae, where it remained for a few minutes before flying west (Figs. 4–5). Cloud cover was slight and visibility was in excess of 5 km. Wind was 12 knots from the south-west, Beaufort sea state was four and the swell was low (<2 m). SST was 29.5°C and the water depth 1,572 m. Just over one hour later, at 12.17 hrs and 51.3 km from the coast, JTS photographed a large skua (skua 4), presumably the same individual as skua 3 (Figs. 6–7).

Two days later, on 27 April, MdB observed a large skua (skua 5) passing the vessel at close range 23.9 km off the coast on the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) border between Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire. The sighting was very brief and due to very low light levels photographs could not be taken.

## Identification

The identification of *Stercorarius* species is often problematic, especially when involving birds sighted at low latitudes. Moults have been advocated as a useful tool for separating South Polar Skua *S. maccormicki* from Great Skua *S. skua* if the bird in question is correctly aged (Newell *et al.* 2013). Ageing is generally possible by careful observation of plumage coloration and pattern, in combination with leg colour, primary shape and primary wear. The breeding seasons of the two species differ by c.6 months, but the moulting

periods of adults of each species overlap broadly with those of second-calendar-year (first-cycle) birds (Newell *et al.* 2013). Birds of the entire 'Brown Skua' *S. antarcticus* complex are similar in appearance to South Polar Skua, but are chunkier with a slimmer bill, smaller head, and have slightly shorter legs.

## Skua 1

Skua 1 (Figs. 2–3) has striking white patches at the base of primaries, visible above and below, a relatively dark head with a paler, greyish, nuchal collar, and a white blaze above the bill base. The broad tail is short with no sign of elongated central feathers. The upperparts are brown with pale feather edges on the wing and mantle; the underparts are brown with paler flanks. The dark bill and head do not appear very large for the size of the bird. The feet and legs were not seen and are not visible in the photographs.

The size and proportions observed show that skua 1 is larger and bulkier than Pomarine Skua *S. pomarinus*. An adult Great Skua is eliminated by the lack of characteristic streaking on the scapulars. A second-calendar-year Great Skua would show pale golden scapulars and back feathers in May. Furthermore, a young Great Skua has an obvious hood. The bird in question has not started its primary moult, but it has commenced to moult the outer secondaries, whereas all second-calendar-year Great Skuas are in active primary moult at this time of year. The primaries do not





**Figure 4–7.** South Polar Skua *Stercorarius maccormicki*, off Ghana, 25 April 2014 (Figs. 4–5: skua 3, Marijke N. de Boer; Figs. 6–7: skua 4, James T. Saulino)

Labbe de McCormick *Stercorarius maccormicki*, au large du Ghana, 25 avril 2014 (Figs. 4–5 : labbe 3, Marijke N. de Boer ; Figs. 6–7 : labbe 4, James T. Saulino)

appear sufficiently worn for an older juvenile and the plumage does not resemble that of a second-calendar-year bird in spring. Second-calendar-year (first-cycle) South Polar Skuas start primary moult later than May, but not all second-cycle or older South Polar Skuas commence their primary moult by May (Newell *et al.* 2013). We therefore conclude that skua 1 was a subadult/adult South Polar Skua.

### *Skua 3 (=skua 4)*

Skua 3 (Figs. 4–5) lacks an obvious dark hood and again the paler, greyish nuchal collar is evident with a small whitish patch on the forehead, near the bill base. The broad tail is short without elongated central feathers. The upperparts are cold brown with paler feather edges; the paler underparts appear diffusely mottled. The dark bill and head do not appear very large for the size of the bird. The feet and legs, which were briefly visible when the bird landed on the water, appear all dark.

Like skua 1, skua 3 is larger and bulkier than Pomarine Skua. Again, a second-calendar-year Great Skua can be eliminated because of the lack

of an obvious hood or active primary moult, whilst an adult is ruled out by the lack of streaking on the upperparts. Adult South Polar Skuas (second-cycle and older) start their moult between May and September, but there is considerable individual variation as to the exact timing (Newell *et al.* 2013). The general features and build of skua 3 match those of an older South Polar Skua with a characteristically ‘cold’ look.

### Discussion

Most documented records of South Polar Skuas during April/May in the Atlantic are from the west side. Kopp *et al.* (2011) studied migration patterns using geolocators attached to adults on their breeding grounds on King George Island, South Shetlands, Antarctica, finding that they migrated to the North Atlantic (three regions) and the North Pacific (two regions) or remained in the Southern Hemisphere, and that they selected the same ocean during the austral winter (or boreal summer) in subsequent years. Birds that used the Atlantic flyway migrated via a broad corridor parallel to the east coast of South America. After crossing the equator they moved north-west to

their main austral wintering area in the North Atlantic, between 7 May and 4 June, although one individual continued north-east and wintered off the coast of Mauritania (Kopp *et al.* 2011).

Return migration from the north-east Atlantic, at c.10°W, commenced on average on 5 September (range: 22 August–3 November), initially to the west coast of Africa and subsequently south-west towards Brazil (Kopp *et al.* 2011). This matches the numerous records of South Polar Skuas off Senegal in the boreal autumn (Newell *et al.* 1997), although these records generated some debate with suggestions that some birds might be immature Great or Brown Skuas (Marr *et al.* 1998), with the result that they have remained largely unconfirmed. However, Kopp *et al.* (2011) confirmed that the seas off north-west Africa are indeed an important migration corridor for South Polar Skua. The region may also serve as an austral wintering ground for the species (Kopp *et al.* 2011), as previously suggested by Newell *et al.* (1997) following the ring recovery of a South Polar Skua in Senegal in July 1991 (Bourne & Curtis 1994).

April–May is known in Ghana as the ‘warm season’ during which SSTs are relatively high (27–29°C) and a strong thermocline is formed in continental shelf waters (Koranteng 2001). Relatively little bird activity was recorded in May 2013. In the last week of April 2014 large *Sargassum* algae mats formed on the surface at frontal boundaries. This attracted seabirds, including Cory’s Shearwaters *Calonectris diomedea*, Sabine’s Gulls *Xema sabini*, Black Terns *Chlidonias niger*, Common Terns *Sterna hirundo*, Royal Terns *Thalasseus maximus*, White-tailed Tropicbirds *Phaethon lepturus*, Long-tailed Skuas *Stercorarius longicaudus* and Pomarine Skuas.

These are the first confirmed records of South Polar Skua for Ghana and their timing (25 April and 12 May) in two consecutive years suggest that the birds regularly cross the Gulf of Guinea during their northbound migration. As these observations are ‘off the beaten track’ of birds originating from the Antarctic Peninsula (Kopp *et al.* 2011), one could speculate that these birds breed further east in Antarctica. South Polar Skua is already known to occur off the west coast of South Africa

(Hockey *et al.* 2005) and South Polar Skuas from other breeding sites in Antarctica probably also show diversity in migration routes (Kopp *et al.* 2011). One such route may partially follow the coast of West Africa, whereby birds cross the Gulf of Guinea before either crossing the Atlantic to spend the boreal summer in the north-west of the ocean or remaining off north-west Africa.

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**First records for Djibouti of Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota*,  
Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*, Savi's Warbler  
*Locustella luscinioides* and Mangrove Reed Warbler  
*Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae***

*Jens Hering<sup>a</sup>, Heidi Hering<sup>a</sup> and Houssein A. Rayaleh<sup>b</sup>*

Premières données pour Djibouti de la Sarcelle hottentote *Anas hottentota*, du Blongios de Chine *Ixobrychus sinensis*, de la Locustelle lusciniôide *Locustella luscinioides* et de la Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*. Trois espèces et une sous-espèce nouvelles pour Djibouti sont documentées. Une Sarcelle hottentote *Anas hottentota* a été photographiée au Lac Abhé, Dikhil, le 30 décembre 2013. Dans la mangrove de Godoria, deux Blongios de Chine *Ixobrychus sinensis* ont été observés le 1er janvier 2014 et une Locustelle lusciniôide *Locustella luscinioides* y a été capturée le 10 janvier 2014. Dans la même mangrove, huit Rousserolles des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae* ont été capturées entre le 1er et le 11 janvier 2014.

**D**uring a stay in Djibouti at the turn of the year 2013/14 to study *Acrocephalus* warblers, three new species for the country were recorded. The form *avicenniae* of *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* (Mangrove Reed Warbler) was also recorded for the first time. The occurrence of these taxa is not mentioned in the relevant literature (e.g. Laurent 1990, Welch & Welch 1998, Redman *et al.* 2011) nor in the current ABC checklist of the birds of Djibouti (Dowsett *et al.* 2013).

**Hottentot Teal *Anas hottentota***

On 30 December 2013 at 09.30–09.45 hrs, we observed a juvenile Hottentot Teal next to a small pool from hot springs in the south-east of Lac Abhé in Dikhil (11°06'8.42"N 41°53'40.68"E; Figs. 1–2). It clearly was disturbed by our approach and flew off to the south-west. The dark cap, pale cheeks, pale blue bill-sides and dark neck-smudge were noted. In flight the bird showed a green speculum with a white trailing



**Figures 1–2.** Hottentot Teal / Sarcelle hottentote *Anas hottentota*, Lac Abhé, Dikhil, Djibouti, 30 December 2013 (Jens Hering)



**Figure 3.** Location of the sighting of a Yellow Bittern *Ixobrychus sinensis*, Godoria mangroves, Obock, Djibouti, 1 January 2014 (Jens Hering)

Endroit où un Blongios de Chine *Ixobrychus sinensis* a été observé, mangrove de Godoria, Obock, Djibouti, 1er janvier 2014 (Jens Hering)

edge and a black-and-white underwing. The absence of dark brown spots on the head and body are indicative of a juvenile prior to its first full moult into adult plumage, as are the suggestion of somewhat dark streaks on the underparts and pale-coloured fringes to the feathers on the back. Additionally, the crown was not dark brown as in the adult, and the ear patch was smaller and paler. Hottentot Teal is a widespread and fairly common non-breeding visitor in Ethiopia (Ash & Atkins 2009). There is also a record in southern Somalia from 1934 (Ash & Mitchell 1998).

#### **Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis*

Several days of searching for Yellow Bittern in Godoria mangrove swamp (12°09'4.15"N 43°24'37.27"E) finally proved successful on 1 January 2014. At c.14.30 hrs an adult climbed just above the roots in a c.3 m-high stand of Grey Mangrove *Avicennia marina* at the east edge of the area (Fig. 3). It was seen for c.10 seconds. During this short period the pale, buffish plumage was immediately apparent. The mantle, back and

wing-coverts were clay-brown, and the rectrices black. The black of the primaries and outer coverts could not be seen. The underparts and neck-sides were cream-coloured, and the crown was asphalt-grey. At 17.00 hrs on the same day, at low tide, a further sighting was made in the large mangrove lagoon. A Yellow Bittern remained for c.1 minute at a mud pool c.150 m away before disappearing into the adjacent thicket. Due to the brevity of the observation, the distance and the unfavourable light conditions, no identifiable photographs could be obtained. A further search at different locations, especially at dusk and using playback of our own recordings from Egypt (*cf.* Hering *et al.* 2013b), was unsuccessful. It should be noted that outside the breeding season, a reaction is probably not to be expected. The potential confusion species, Little Bittern *I. minutus*, has only been recorded once in Djibouti, on 16 May 1990 at Minkille (G. Welch *in litt.* 2014).

In respect of the occurrence of the Yellow Bittern in Djibouti, further studies are necessary, especially during the breeding season (probably





**Figures 4–5.** Savi's Warbler / *Locustella luscinioides* *Locustella luscinioides*, Godoria mangroves, Obock, Djibouti, 10 January 2014 (Jens Hering)

from February/March). A good example has been set by studies carried out in mangrove swamps in southern Egypt (Hering *et al.* 2013b). Here, in 2012, the first record of the species for mainland Africa and the Western Palearctic was made, and the species has been recorded breeding. Data on the behaviour, breeding biology and range expansion, etc., can be found in Barthel & Hering (2013), which summarises knowledge about Yellow Bittern to date.

Elsewhere in the region, Yellow Bittern has been observed only on Socotra, where it was first recorded in 1999, when a juvenile was photographed on 19 November (Aspinall *et al.* 2004). This was followed by sightings of juveniles in March–December 2008 and an adult in April 2008 and February 2009, and finally a juvenile or winter-plumaged adult in February 2011 (Porter & Suleiman 2014). Breeding is suspected, but has not been confirmed (Porter & Suleiman 2014).

#### **Savi's Warbler** *Locustella luscinioides*

On 10 January 2014 at 08.00 hrs, a Savi's Warbler was mist-netted between *Avicennia* bushes in the large Godoria mangrove swamp lagoon (Figs. 4–5). The following features were noted: uniformly reddish brown with dirty grey underparts, reddish brown-green flanks and

unmarked breast; undertail-coverts rusty beige with a suggestion of paler feather tips; short, indistinct, pale supercilium; broad tail with fine, dark, horizontal bands above; legs pink-brown. Wing length 70.5 mm. A blood sample was taken for DNA analysis. Savi's Warbler is known to winter in Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Kenya (Nicolaus 1987, Pearson *et al.* 1988, Ash & Atkins 2010, Kennerley & Pearson 2010).

#### **Mangrove Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*

On 30 December 2013 at 14.00 hrs, two reed warblers were heard singing in *Avicennia* bushes on the east side of Godoria mangrove, near the tourist camp. Alarm calls were also heard. Using playback we were able to encourage four more individuals to sing at four different locations. On 31 December, two Mangrove Reed Warblers (Fig. 6) and a Eurasian Reed Warbler *A. s. fuscus* were trapped, measured and samples taken for DNA analysis. More Mangrove Reed Warblers were caught and examined on 1, 6, 10 and 11 January; we thus collected biometric data and blood samples from eight individuals. There was an unmistakable difference between the migrant or wintering Eurasian Reed Warblers ( $n = 4$ , wing 65–67 mm, mean 66 mm) and the presumed



**Figure 6.** Mangrove Reed Warbler / Rousserolle des mangroves *Acrocephalus scirpaceus avicenniae*, Gadoria mangroves, Obock, Djibouti, 31 December 2013 (Jens Hering)

resident *avicenniae*. The shorter, rounder wings (57–60 mm, mean 58 mm) left no doubt as to the subspecific identity of the latter (cf. Kennerley & Pearson 2010). They were olive-brown above and creamy white below. The majority of the birds caught had more or less heavily worn plumage, especially the tail feathers.

Mangrove Reed Warbler, which was described by Ash *et al.* (1989), is endemic to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden region and was hitherto known, on the African coast, from southern Egypt south to Eritrea and in northern Somalia, but not yet from Djibouti (Redman *et al.* 2009, Kennerley & Pearson 2010). In Djibouti, there have been previous sightings in mangroves of unidentified, unstreaked *Acrocephalus* warblers south of Khor Angur, c.30 km north of the records reported here, on 27 March 1984 (1–2 birds), around Djibouti harbour on 1 April 1984 (at least six birds) and at Gadoria, probably at the same site as mentioned here, on 5–7 March 1990 (at least six) (G. Welch *in litt.* 2014).

In contrast to Clamorous Reed Warbler *A. stentoreus brunnescens*, which is common in the area and was singing intensively during our stay (Hering *in prep.*), the full song of Mangrove Reed Warbler is not distinctive. The distribution, behaviour and breeding biology of both taxa are still inadequately known (Ash *et al.* 1989, Kennerley & Pearson 2010, Hering *et al.* 2011, 2012, 2013a, Porter & Stanton 2011).

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## First record of Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* for Tunisia

Chris G. Bradshaw

**Première observation du Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* en Tunisie.** Le 18 mars 2014 un Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* a été observé près de Douz, Tunisie. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour le pays. Cette espèce nord-américaine a déjà été observée plusieurs fois au Maroc, mais il n'y a pas de mentions pour l'Algérie ni pour la Libye.

In March 2014 I led my first birding tour of Tunisia for Birdwatching Breaks. We began the morning of 18 March with a visit to some wetlands on the outskirts of Douz. Our first stop was at an area of reed-fringed shallow pools (at c.33°28'40.39"N 8°56'56.52"E) where a quick scan revealed the presence of waders such as Ruff *Calidris pugnax*, Wood *Tringa glareola* and Marsh Sandpipers *T. stagnatalis*, and Spotted Redshank *T. erythropus*. In the perfect light conditions, with early-morning sunshine behind us, I decided to check the area more thoroughly, and so we set up

our telescopes to check through the waders. After just a couple of minutes I came across a *Tringa* that was facing me on a raised clump of flattened reeds. It was clearly larger and taller than the nearby Wood Sandpipers. The breast was suffused brownish grey and the belly contrastingly white. The bill was intermediate in length between that of the nearby Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, and the legs appeared to be bright yellow. I quickly realised that I was watching a Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*, a species with which I am familiar from regular trips to North America and also having

seen several vagrants in the UK. Overall size, bill length and shape enabled me to eliminate Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*. Although uncertain as to how rare this species was in Tunisia, I realised that it must be a significant find, so I proceeded to get the four group members and our local guide onto the bird. We watched it for c.10 minutes before the discovery of a Little Crake *Zapornia parva* distracted us, and when I later returned to search for the yellowlegs, I could not relocate it.

A poor digiscoped photograph was taken, but is unsuitable for publication here. The following brief description was taken. **Size** Larger than Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, but obviously smaller than a Spotted Redshank that was also present for comparison. **Head** A white supercilium was most obvious in front of and above the eye. Crown, nape and neck brownish grey. Throat white. **Upperparts** Mantle and scapulars rather uniform brownish grey. Wing-coverts and tertials also brownish grey, but edged with pale notches. In flight a white rump contrasting with a darker tail and dark back was visible. The white of the rump did not extend up the back (as it would in Greenshank, for example) and was similar to the pattern shown by Wood Sandpiper. **Underparts** Breast suffused brownish grey, contrasting with a clean white belly. **Bare parts** Bright yellow legs clearly longer than in Wood Sandpiper, but not as 'leggy' as nearby Marsh Sandpipers. The toes projected beyond the tail in flight. Bill dark, fine and of medium length, longer than in Wood Sandpiper, but not as long, nor as fine as in Marsh Sandpiper.

This appears to be the first record for Tunisia (Isenmann *et al.* 2005). Prior to 2003 there had been five records in Morocco (Thévenot *et al.* 2003), but there are no records from

neighbouring Algeria or Libya (Isenmann & Moali 2000, Atkinson & Caddick 2014). As a regular transatlantic vagrant to Western Europe with small numbers annual in the UK and records from a significant number of European countries including France, Spain and Italy (Chandler 2009), it is to be expected that some individuals will migrate south to winter in Africa. This bird had presumably done so and was returning with other northbound migrant waders via the Douz wetlands.

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# First record of Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* for Tristan da Cunha, South Atlantic

Peter G. Ryan

**Première mention du Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* pour Tristan da Cunha, Atlantique Sud.** Les 30 septembre–1er octobre 2014 un Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes* a été observé sur l'île de Tristan da Cunha. Ceci constitue la première donnée pour l'archipel de cette espèce nord-américaine, dont l'aire d'hivernage s'étend du sud des États Unis jusqu'en Amérique du Sud.

On the evening of 30 September 2014, I observed a *Tringa* wader flying inland from the coast west of the potato patches on the main island of Tristan da Cunha, in the central South Atlantic Ocean (37°05.6'S 12°20.3'W). I was unable to follow it at the time, but the following day I located what was presumably the same individual in short-grass pasture c.350 m inland from where it was seen the previous day. The only other birds in the area were 10–12 Antarctic Terns *Sterna vittata*, which were feeding on insects by quartering the pastures in the air and on foot—behaviour I had witnessed previously (Ryan 1985). The bird was reasonably approachable and permitted good views through binoculars before I deliberately flushed it in order to confirm the wing, tail and upperparts pattern. On flushing, it gave a soft *ten* call, and flew c.50 m before landing again on the short-cropped pasture.

I identified it as a Lesser Yellowlegs *T. flavipes*, a species that I have observed previously in the New World, as well as in South Africa (cf. Ryan & Graham 1984). The most salient feature was the long, yellow legs, which were too long for Green *T. ochropus*, Solitary *T. solitaria* or Wood Sandpipers *T. glareola*. Some Wood Sandpipers can approach Lesser Yellowlegs in structure, but this bird had a modest supercilium mainly in front of the eye, and lacked the heavily spangled upperparts of a Wood Sandpiper. In flight, the feet extended well beyond the tail tip, and the white rump did not extend onto the back, excluding Marsh Sandpiper *T. stagnatilis* and Common Greenshank *T. nebularia*. Bill length was roughly equal to that of the head, distinctly shorter, straighter and more slender than that of Greater Yellowlegs *T. melanoleuca*. The bird still retained some vestiges of heavy streaking on the breast-sides, and was aged as an adult moulting out of breeding plumage.

The Tristan da Cunha archipelago boasts an impressive list of vagrants, including several wader species. Although slightly closer to Africa than South America, the prevailing westerly winds tend to result in most vagrants arriving from the New World, and the same is true for most of the landbirds that have colonised the islands (Ryan *et al.* 2013). Despite this, just two *Tringa* species have been recorded on the islands: Solitary Sandpiper and Common Greenshank, from the Nearctic and Palearctic, respectively (Ryan 2007, Dowsett *et al.* 2014). This appears to be the first record for the archipelago of Lesser Yellowlegs, a Nearctic species that winters from the southern USA to South America (van Gils & Wiersma 1996).

Most vagrants are recorded from the main island of Tristan, partly because of greater observer effort, and partly because vagrants probably survive longer on Tristan. Numbers of predatory Brown Skuas *Catharacta antarctica* are depressed on Tristan due to the lack of potential prey and occasional persecution, and there is a greater diversity of habitats due to extensive habitat modification of the lowlands (Ryan 2007).

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## More on sunbathing in Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus*

Robert J. Dowsett

**B**ijsma & van der Kamp (2014) described an adult Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* in Mali sunbathing at midday and apparently stressed. They suggested this behaviour, apparently hitherto unreported in this species, was a reaction to high temperatures. However, a similar observation made (in company with Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and several others) at Lake Awassa, Ethiopia (07°03'N 38°28'E; 1,660 m) occurred at 17.10 hrs, when it was not especially hot. The bird assumed that position for several minutes (Fig. 1), and apart from its open bill it did not appear distressed.

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**Figure 1.** Yellow-billed Kite *Milvus migrans parasitus* sunbathing, Awassa, Ethiopia, 26 October 2014 (R. J. Dowsett)

Milan noir *Milvus migrans parasitus* prenant un bain de soleil, Awassa, Éthiopie, 26 octobre 2014 (R. J. Dowsett)



## Little-known African bird: Maned Owl *Jubula lettii*—an elusive rainforest endemic

Ron Demey<sup>a</sup>

Photograph by Pierre Camberlein<sup>b</sup>

**Le Duc à crinière *Jubula lettii*, un endémique énigmatique de la forêt tropicale humide.** Le Duc à crinière *Jubula lettii* est un oiseau forestier peu connu, dont l'aire de répartition s'étend du Libéria au Ghana et du sud-ouest du Cameroun à la République démocratique du Congo. L'espèce a été décrite, en 1889, par Büttikofer et nommée d'après Lett, le chasseur qui l'avait découverte au Libéria. Après avoir été placée initialement dans le genre *Bubo*, Bates estimait que l'espèce était suffisamment distincte pour mériter son propre genre monotypique, qu'il nomma *Jubula*, la forme diminutive du latin *iuba*, signifiant une crête ou crinière. Les longues plumes de la calotte et la nuque, qui forment la 'crinière', ne sont toutefois pas ce qui frappe le plus dans la nature, mais les aigrettes (« oreilles ») remarquablement longues. Les sexes de ce hibou brun-roux de taille moyenne sont semblables, la femelle étant d'habitude plus sombre et plus marquée, mais il y a beaucoup de variations. Le jeune est nettement plus pâle. La biologie de l'espèce demeure peu connue. Elle habite la forêt primaire, particulièrement les zones encombrées de nappes de lianes sur lesquelles elle trouve refuge dans la journée. L'espèce semble être principalement insectivore. Le nid n'a pas encore été trouvé et les vocalisations demeurent inconnues. Pouvoir observer cette espèce, classée comme « Insuffisamment connue », est donc surtout une question de chance.

**A**mong the least-known African bird species, several are, unsurprisingly, nocturnal. Maned Owl *Jubula lettii* is one of them. This seldom-seen forest endemic, recorded from Liberia to Ghana and from southern Cameroon to DR Congo, was first described, in 1889, by the Swiss naturalist Johann Büttikofer. He named it for the collector Lett, of which not much more is known than that he was Büttikofer's landlord when the latter stayed at Schieffelinville, south-east of Monrovia, during his second expedition to Liberia, in 1886–87 (Büttikofer 1889). The type specimen was collected in 'Pessy Country', i.e. north of what is today Careysburg, north-east of Monrovia (Büttikofer 1889, Gatter 1997). Although Büttikofer (1889) placed it in the genus *Bubo*, some researchers subsequently opined that it belonged in *Scops* (e.g. Sharpe 1900) or *Otus* (e.g. Sclater 1930). Bates (1929), who collected several specimens in Cameroon, considered the species to be so different from known genera that he erected a new genus for it, which he named *Jubula*—a diminutive of the Latin *iuba*, signifying a crest or mane (Jobling 1991).

However, some authorities, e.g. Reichenow (1901), Chapin (1939), White (1965) and Brosset & Énard (1986), merged it with Neotropical *Lophotrix* based on the species' similarity to Crested Owl *L. cristata* (Fig. 1). This resemblance

had already been noted by Büttikofer (1889) himself, who felt that the owl 'shows no affinity to any of the owls at present known from the Old World, but might rather be compared with the West-Indian [*sic*] *Bubo cristatus*, on account of the exceedingly long ear-tufts and the white alar spots.'

The superficial similarities in appearance and the two species' similar ecology are now generally suspected to reflect convergent evolution (Holt *et al.* 1999, König *et al.* 1999). Whether *Jubula* and *Lophotrix* are relicts from an early taxon of owls that survived only in old-growth forests unmodified during periods of climatic cooling, as has sometimes been suggested (Voous 1966, Hekstra *in* Burton 1984), demands further study. At present, Maned Owl's affinities remain uncertain.

The most distinctive features of this medium-sized, rufous-brown owl are its bushy ear-tufts and elongated crown and nape feathers, which afford it the maned appearance from which the species' scientific and vernacular names are derived. As few people have observed the species in life, Maned Owl's illustrations in handbooks and field guides are mostly based on specimens and may be misleading. Indeed, Brosset & Énard (1977), who had the opportunity to observe the species on several occasions in north-eastern Gabon, stress that its most striking character in the field



is not the eponymous ‘mane’, but rather the very long ear-tufts, which are much longer than those of, for example, Northern Long-eared Owl *Asio otus*, and are erected at 45 degrees. This is beautifully shown in Fig. 2. This feature had already been noted by Bates (*in* Bannerman 1933), who reported that upon discovering a bird in dense, shady forest vegetation, its erect ear-tufts showed very prominently.

The sexes are similar, most females being darker and more heavily patterned, but there is substantial individual variation (Brosset & Éard 1977, Kemp 1988). Although Brosset & Éard (1977) claim that pronounced sexual dimorphism exists in size, the male allegedly being one-third smaller than the female, this is not borne out by measurements available in the literature (e.g. Bannerman 1933, Kemp 1988). As in many owl species, juveniles are paler than adults and less distinctly marked overall.

Little is known concerning Maned Owl’s habits. It occurs in rainforest, where the species seems to favour areas with dense lianas (Brosset & Éard 1986). Its small, weak feet and bill suggest it is incapable of taking large vertebrate prey, and limited data from stomach contents indicate a diet of insects, notably grasshoppers and beetles, but remains of a young bird were found in one juvenile



**Figure 1.** Crested Owl *Lophotrix cristata*, Porto Velho, Rondônia, Brazil, 12 September 2014; this Neotropical species’ superficial similarity to Maned Owl *Jubula lettii*, which is now generally suspected to reflect convergent evolution, led some ornithologists to place the latter in the genus *Lophotrix* (Vitor Torga Lombardi)

Duc à aigrettes *Lophotrix cristata*, Porto Velho, Rondônia, Brésil, 12 septembre 2014 ; la ressemblance superficielle de cette espèce néotropicale avec le Duc à crinière *Jubula lettii*, dont on pense maintenant qu’elle est le produit d’une convergence évolutive, a amené certains ornithologues à placer ce dernier dans le genre *Lophotrix* (Vitor Torga Lombardi)

**Figure 2.** Maned Owls *Jubula lettii*, environs of Mikongo, near Lopé National Park, Gabon, 14 August 2014; the birds were perched in the open at c.2 m height and c.5 m from a forest trail, in an area with many lianas (Pierre Camberlein)

Ducs à crinière *Jubula lettii*, environs de Mikongo, près du Parc National de la Lopé, Gabon, 14 août 2014 ; les oiseaux étaient posés à découvert à 2 m de hauteur et à environ 5 m d’un chemin forestier dans une zone avec de nombreuses lianes (Pierre Camberlein)



(Bates 1929, Brosset & Énard 1986). Curiously, a specimen in Ghana was found to have been feeding on green vegetable matter 'exactly like squashed green peas' (Bannerman 1951).

The nest has never been found and its vocalisations are unknown. A song, tape-recorded in the Kouilou Region of southern Congo-Brazzaville and originally ascribed to the species, was subsequently identified as belonging to Vermiculated Fishing Owl *Scotopelia bouvieri*—an experienced hunter, who could correctly identify various owl calls and had shot a vocalising Maned Owl, had apparently confused the song of both species (Dowsett-Lemaire 1992, 1996). This may suggest that they possess a similar pattern and that the song probably comprises a single hoot followed by a series (Dowsett-Lemaire 1996). More recently it has, rather vaguely, been described as 'a soft cooo, similar to that of Collared Dove [*Streptopelia decaocto*]' (BirdLife International 2014).

Finding this secretive owl, which is justifiably classified as Data Deficient (BirdLife International 2014), is therefore a matter of luck. In Cameroon, Bates (1930) found that, in the daytime, its presence was often betrayed by the excited chatter of small birds mobbing it. Lowe (*in* Bannerman 1951) had the same experience in Ghana, when, in 1934, he shot the only specimen obtained from the country (which also, incidentally, is still the only record: Dowsett-Lemaire & Dowsett 2014). As long as no definitely identified recordings of its vocalisations are available, the enigmatic Maned Owl is likely to remain elusive.

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## Photospot:

# Juvenile Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum*

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### Première photo d'une Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum* juvénile à l'état sauvage.

La Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum* est une petite chouette forestière dont l'aire de répartition s'étend du Sierra Leone au Ghana et du sud du Cameroun au bassin du Congo et au Kenya occidental. L'espèce, qui est généralement peu commune, est en partie diurne et chante parfois pendant la journée, ce qui facilite son observation. Curieusement, son plumage juvénile n'est pas décrit dans les ouvrages de référence majeurs et selon les monographies récentes ce plumage demeure inconnu. Nous l'avons toutefois décrit succinctement dans notre *Birds of Western Africa* (2001) comme 'Parties inférieures sans marron et avec des taches plus petites, ou sans taches'. Ceci est basé sur quatre spécimens dans la collection du Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, dont nous présentons ici les photos, avec la première photo d'un juvénile à l'état sauvage.

**R**ed-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum* is a small forest owl occurring from Sierra Leone to Ghana and from southern Cameroon to the Congo Basin and western Kenya (Holt *et al.* 1999). Although it is at present not considered to be globally threatened and may be locally frequent, it is generally rather uncommon to rare (Holt *et al.* 1999, BirdLife International 2014). This quite distinctive, attractive little owl is partially diurnal and sometimes calls during the day, which facilitates its observation. The nominate race, confined to the Upper Guinea forest block, has rufous-chestnut breast-sides and flanks, the rest of the underparts being white with bold blackish spots. The other three races, *pycrafti*, *medje* and *elgonense*, which principally differ from each other in measurements and the tone of the upperparts, have less rufous and are more heavily spotted below (Fig. 1).

Curiously, the juvenile plumage has not been described in any major handbook (e.g. Kemp 1988, Holt *et al.* 1999) and recent monographs continue to state that it is undescribed (König *et al.* 2008, Mikkola 2013). However, we did present a succinct description in our *Birds of Western Africa* (Borrow & Demey 2001): 'Underparts lack rufous-chestnut and have smaller or no spots'. This was based on four specimens of the subspecies *medje* from DR Congo in the collection of the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium. The first two, collected in the north-east—at Buta, Bas-Uele, by J. Hutsebaut in the 1930s, and at Paulis, now Isoro, Haut-Uele, by Abbeloos in 1949—have small spots on the entire

underparts, which are white, without any rufous, and are smaller than adults (Figs. 2–3). The other two—a male and female, secured at Bolombo-Buya, Basankusu, by P. Herroelen on 5 April 1956 and at Ikela, Tshuapa, by P. Lootens on 30



**Figure 1.** Adult Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum pycrafti*, Lopé National Park, Gabon, 16 July 2013 (Nik Borrow)

Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum pycrafti* adulte, Parc National de la Lopé, Gabon, 16 juillet 2013 (Nik Borrow)





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**Figures 2–3.** Juvenile Red-chested Owlets *Glaucidium tephronotum medje*, Buta, Bas-Uele, Oriental Province, DR Congo, 1930s (RG 18365; top) and Paulis, Haut-Uele, Oriental Province, DR Congo, 1949 (RG 47594) (A. Reygel / © Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium)

Chevêchettes à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum medje* juvéniles, Buta, Bas-Uele, Province Orientale, RD Congo, années 1930 (RG 18365 ; en haut) et Paulis, Haut-Uele, Province Orientale, RD Congo, 1949 (RG 47594) (A. Reygel / © Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgique).

**Figures 4–5.** Immature Red-chested Owlets *Glaucidium tephronotum medje*, Ikela, Tshuapa, Equateur Province, DR Congo, 30 June 1956 (RG 82747, female; top) and Bolombo-Buya, Basankusu, Equateur Province, DR Congo, 5 April 1956 (RG 81111, male) (A. Reygel / © Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium)

Chevêchettes à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum medje* immatures, Ikela, Tshuapa, Équateur, RD Congo, 30 juin 1956 (RG 82747, femelle ; en haut) et Bolombo-Buya, Basankusu, Équateur, RD Congo, 5 avril 1956 (RG 81111, male) (A. Reygel / © Musée Royal de l'Afrique Centrale, Tervuren, Belgique)

June 1956—have all-white underparts, but for one or two juvenile spots, whilst one or two adult spots have appeared; the birds are also larger than the previous two, being as large as adults (Figs. 4–5). The birds with spotted underparts are thus juveniles, whilst those with unspotted underparts have a subsequent, still immature plumage. Given the collection date of these specimens, it is remarkable that the plumage of young Red-chested Owlets has remained unknown for so long.

In March 2014, NB photographed a juvenile in the Bakossi Mountains, Cameroon (Fig. 6). This, as far as we can ascertain, is the first photograph of a juvenile Red-chested Owlet in the wild.

### Acknowledgement

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**Figure 6.** Juvenile Red-chested Owlet *Glaucidium tephronotum pycraftii*, Bakossi Mountains, Cameroon, 27 March 2014 (Nik Borrow)

Chevêchette à pieds jaunes *Glaucidium tephronotum pycraftii* juvénile, Monts Bakossi, Cameroun, 27 mars 2014 (Nik Borrow)

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## Viewpoint:

# The most urgent bird conservation priorities in Africa and its islands

Chris Lotz

### Africa and Madagascar in context

Recently, sub-Saharan Africa has been shown to harbour a disproportionate share of the world's avian genetic diversity (Lotz *et al.* 2013). While South America is well known for its incomparable bird species diversity, Africa's fewer species are distributed across a much greater number of families. Colombia has 1,816 species in only 86 families, whereas an equal-sized area of East Africa (Tanzania / Uganda combined) has 1,324 species spread across a remarkable 103 families (using conservative species counts, with vagrant and introduced species removed; Lotz *et al.* 2013). East Africa must therefore contain greater avian genetic diversity than Colombia, when viewing relative diversity as the share of a phylogenetic tree rather than simply as the number of species: by counting only outer branches of a phylogeny (i.e. the species), one obtains an inaccurate measure of the region's real diversity. Present-day Africa retains a great many more survivors of the original Gondwana avifauna than anywhere else (Jetz *et al.* 2012), which explains its relatively large number of bird families (and genetic diversity).

Madagascar, on the other hand, supports low overall avian diversity at all taxonomic levels, since it has been isolated in time and space for longer than any other large landmass (it has been separated from India for 88 million years and from other landmasses for much longer; e.g. Goodman & Benstead 2005, Vences *et al.* 2009). Madagascar broke away from India and gradually drifted towards the African continent, while India merged with the rest of Asia. However, because of this extremely lengthy isolation, Madagascar now contains many endemic genera and even several unique families (not only species) found nowhere else on the planet.

### The importance of taxonomy

As already mentioned, it is important to look beyond just species (and rather at the phylogeny as a whole) when deciding which areas require the

most urgent conservation action. According to Jetz *et al.* (2014), a mere 10 % of the world's currently recognised species (the most evolutionarily distinct ones) disproportionately represent a third of the total evolutionary diversity of all birds! Not all species are of equal taxonomic value. Generally, two species resulting from a controversial split will be genetically more similar to one another than two 'traditional' species are to each other, and furthermore, two long-accepted species belonging to the same genus will, of course, share more genes (and be evolutionarily less distinct) than two species in different genera. If one's aim is to maximise the protection of genetic diversity, then it is obviously more important not to lose an entire monospecific genus (or family) than it is to lose a single species from a polytypic genus. But there is a very real risk of entire genera—and all their unique genes—becoming extinct, because current Red list assessments have classified all species of some genera as globally threatened (or a monotypic genus as threatened). In this note, I highlight what could be the 'worst' losses (from the perspective of higher taxonomic levels) in Africa. Undoubtedly, we must do our best to prevent any species from becoming extinct, but the species tabulated below are meritorious of our most supreme efforts. As an example (from Rheindt 2006), some previously recognised *Phylloscopus* warbler species are younger than expected based on molecular evidence, whereas several potential (cryptic) species in the same genus are slightly more divergent than previously thought (perhaps indicating they should be split), but the point I am making here is that branches of the phylogeny that are only c.1 million years old (whether split or not) obviously contain far less genetic diversity than species that are much older than this. (Of course, genus and family-level taxonomy are far from completely stable, but the point remains that by looking beyond just species enhances the accuracy of an assessment aimed at conserving maximum genetic diversity).

Now that a comprehensive bird phylogeny has been attempted (Jetz *et al.* 2012), the EDGE of existence programme is starting to elucidate the world's top 100 birds that are both 'Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered'. EDGE species do not have any close relatives, are genetically very unique and are extremely distinct in their appearance and behaviour. 'If they disappear, there will be nothing like them left on the planet' according to [www.edgeofexistence.org/about/edge\\_science.php](http://www.edgeofexistence.org/about/edge_science.php) (which also provides background to the science behind the EDGE project). A good example is provided by the Dodo *Raphus cucullatus*: when this highly unique species became extinct, there was simply nothing like it left.

The Jetz avian phylogenetic tree will permit EDGE researchers to measure the evolutionary distinctness of each bird species, thereby demonstrating which are the most unique, with the aim of ensuring these species are conserved (as a priority) and ultimately minimising total losses of genetic diversity and evolutionary history. The assumption is that resources are too limited to conserve every species, hence the potential

need (under certain circumstances) to prioritise relatively unique ones as more important than less distinct ones. Of course, maximising the degree of genetic diversity conserved is not the sole aim of conservation. But, if Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex* became extinct, the planet would lose much more biological diversity than if a *Phylloscopus* warbler went extinct but was survived by a very close sister species that is treated as Least Concern. It should also be noted that conservation priorities are also governed by factors such as the cost of protecting a certain species, the likelihood of success and which species a donor selects for protection. While conservation is a balance between complex political and scientific considerations, if all other factors are equal, then it seems better to ensure that families and genera do not go extinct, as a *greater* priority than species. Here, I tabulate Africa's families and genera that consist entirely of one to three threatened species, meaning that unless these taxa are urgently conserved, we would lose a disproportionate quota of avian evolutionary distinctness. I then also provide recommendations as to how to potentially focus our approach to conservation of birds in Africa and its islands.

TAXON	NOTES
Four families comprised entirely of Vulnerable species:	
Shoebill <i>Balaeniceps rex</i> (Family Balaenicipitidae)	Sometimes even placed in its own order.
Secretarybird <i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i> (Family Sagittariidae)	
Both White-necked Picathartes <i>Picathartes gymnocephalus</i> and Grey-necked Picathartes <i>P. oreas</i> (Family Picathartidae)	
All three mesites, Subdesert Mesite <i>Monias benschi</i> , White-breasted Mesite <i>Mesitornis variegatus</i> and Brown Mesite <i>M. unicolor</i> , a family comprising just these three species, all of them endemic to Madagascar (Family Mesitornithidae)	One of the three species, Subdesert Mesite, is placed in its own genus, meaning that <i>Monias</i> is restricted to a tiny range in the South Malagasy Spiny Forests Important Bird Area (EBA) and occurs in just one Important Bird Area (IBA), Mikea Forest, which is not formally protected (Project ZICOMA 2001).
One Critically Endangered genus:	
Gough Bunting <i>Rowettia goughensis</i>	The species is seriously threatened by introduced mouse predation, which has forced the population to use suboptimal habitat ( <a href="http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=9477">http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=9477</a> ).
Five Endangered genera:	
Madagascar Serpent Eagle <i>Eutriorchis astur</i>	In contrast, as an example, if Madagascar Fish Eagle <i>Haliaeetus vociferoides</i> , Critically Endangered, became extinct, it would be survived by nine other congeners).
Udzungwa Forest Partridge <i>Xenoperdix udzungwensis</i>	
Hooded Vulture <i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>	
Humblot's Flycatcher <i>Humblotia flavirostris</i>	
Ethiopian (Stresemann's) Bush-crow <i>Zavattariornis stresemanni</i>	



**Twenty genera containing only 1–3 species that are all Vulnerable or worse**

Blue-winged Goose <i>Cyanochen cyanoptera</i>	
Lappet-faced Vulture <i>Torgos tracheliotos</i>	
White-headed Vulture <i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>	
Martial Eagle <i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>	
Inaccessible Rail <i>Atlantisia rogersi</i>	St. Helena Crake <i>A. podarcus</i> is extinct, leaving this Vulnerable species as the sole extant representative of the genus.
Black Crowned Crane <i>Balearica pavonina</i> is Vulnerable, and Grey Crowned Crane <i>B. regulorum</i> is Endangered	
Wattled Crane <i>Bucyranus carunculatus</i>	Some lists lump this genus with <i>Grus</i> .
Great Bustard <i>Otis tarda</i>	Not an African endemic (its conservation is best tackled in Eurasia).
Swynnerton's Robin <i>Swynnertonia swynnertonii</i>	
The <i>Heteromirafra</i> larks: Rudd's Lark <i>H. ruddi</i> , Sidamo (Liben) Lark <i>H. sidamoensis</i> (includes Archer's Lark <i>H. archeri</i> , with which it is now lumped).	Rudd's Lark, a Vulnerable South African endemic, occurs almost entirely on unprotected farmland—85% of the world population occurs within the proposed Grassland Biosphere Reserve, IBA SA020 (Barnes 1998, 2000), while Sidamo Lark is considered likely to become the next African bird to go extinct, with <250 individuals remaining ( <a href="http://www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=8123">www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=8123</a> ).
Northern Bald Ibis <i>Geronticus eremita</i> and Southern Bald Ibis <i>G. calvus</i> : the former is Critically Endangered, the latter Vulnerable.	Although the genus is not endemic to Africa, its conservation in Africa is of paramount importance, with Morocco and South Africa being the critical range states.
Marbled Teal <i>Marmaronetta angustirostris</i>	Not an African endemic (its conservation is best tackled in Eurasia).
Congo Peacock <i>Afropavo congensis</i>	
Grauer's (African Green) Broadbill <i>Pseudocalyptomena graueri</i>	Recent habitat destruction in the DR Congo might mean that its stronghold lies in Uganda within a single reserve, Bwindi Impenetrable National Park.
São Tomé Shorttail <i>Amaurocichla bocagii</i>	
Bernier's Vanga <i>Oriolia bernieri</i>	
Helmet Vanga <i>Euryceros prevostii</i>	
Both <i>Brachypteracias</i> ground rollers, Short-legged <i>B. leptosomus</i> and Scaly Ground Rollers <i>B. squamiger</i>	
Long-tailed Ground Roller <i>Uratelomis chimaera</i>	
Both or all three (depending on how many species are recognised) <i>Nesospiza</i> buntings of the Tristan da Cunha archipelago: the 'controversial' species Wilkins's Bunting <i>N. wilkinsi</i> is Endangered, whereas Inaccessible Bunting <i>N. acunhae</i> and Nightingale Bunting <i>N. questi</i> are Vulnerable.	

**Sixteen genera containing only 1–3 species that are all Near Threatened or worse**

The genus <i>Phoebastria</i> : Sooty Albatross <i>P. fusca</i> (Endangered) and Light-mantled Sooty Albatross <i>P. palpebrata</i> (Near Threatened)	Not African endemics.
Cinereous Vulture <i>Aegypius monachus</i>	Not an African endemic (its conservation is best tackled in Eurasia).
Crowned Eagle <i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>	
Bateleur <i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>	
Madagascar Crested Ibis <i>Lophotis cristata</i>	
Lesser Flamingo <i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>	Not endemic to Africa, but the bulk of its population is found on the continent.
Rouget's Rail <i>Rougetius rougetii</i>	
Houbara Bustard <i>Chlamydotis undulata</i>	
Little Bustard <i>Tetrax tetrax</i>	Not endemic to Africa.
Dupont's Lark <i>Chersophilus duponti</i>	Not endemic to Africa.

Madagascar Yellowbrow <i>Crossleyia xanthophrys</i>	
Tristan Thrush <i>Nesocichla eremita</i>	
Angola Cave Chat <i>Xenocopsychus ansorgei</i>	
Bush Blackcap <i>Lioptilus nigricapillus</i>	
The genus <i>Kupeornis</i> : White-throated Mountain Babbler <i>K. gilbert</i> (Endangered), Red-collared Babbler <i>K. rufocinctus</i> (Near Threatened) and Chapin's Babbler <i>K. chapini</i> (Near Threatened)	
White-tailed Warbler <i>Polioptila lopesi</i>	
Three Data Deficient genera:	
Maned Owl <i>Jubula lettii</i>	
African River Martin <i>Pseudochelidon eurystomina</i>	
Emerald Starling <i>Coccycolius iris</i>	Taxonomically enigmatic and sometimes lumped with the genus <i>Lamprolaimis</i> : first, we need to elucidate how genetically different it is from <i>Lamprolaimis</i> and, if very divergent, it will become even more urgent to discover the level of threat it faces.

Recommendations

BirdLife International and other conservation organisations should clearly mention phylogenetic uniqueness (along with Red Data categories) on their websites (for example, in their species factsheets) and in their printed publications. This will help clarify which species harbour the largest proportions of evolutionary distinctness (or genetic diversity).

Not only species, but also genera, families, and orders of threatened birds should be assessed whenever conservation is considered. Literature for other taxonomic groups (e.g. primates and amphibians) highlights the need to examine taxonomic levels above species (e.g., Rodrigues & Gaston 2002, Kallimanis *et al.* 2012), yet work on birds often ignores this.

As avian phylogeny becomes better resolved, we can add precision to our conservation prioritisation (as Jetz *et al.* 2014 started to do), but in the meantime the current list of threatened genera and species in Africa shows where resources could be spent. Jetz *et al.* (2014) strongly highlighted Madagascar as one of the world’s greatest conservation priorities; the current table is consistent with this and also provides specific birds and sites to consider within Madagascar. What we now need is to focus more closely on Madagascar (and other areas highlighted herein and by Jetz *et al.* 2014) with better-resolved phylogenies: my method is the best we have for roughly prioritising bird conservation at higher taxonomic levels (thus helping to conserve as much genetic diversity and

evolutionary distinctness as possible). The ideal is to measure distance (on the phylogeny) between all the taxa but failing that, threatened genera and family lists are obviously extremely helpful (and considerably better than examining solely species).

Important Bird Areas (IBAs) and Endemic Bird Areas (EBAs) containing threatened genera and families (listed above) might be prioritised by taxonomic weighting—the EDGE species initiative is a good one in this regard. Specifically, formal and strict protection should be given to certain IBAs such as South Africa’s Grassland Biosphere Reserve (to protect *Heteromiraфра*) and Madagascar’s Mikea Forest (for its unique mesite and ground roller, among others). While the entire IUCN threatened bird list is extremely important, if inadequate resources are available, then the highest priorities to perhaps consider first are listed in this note, and protected areas could be weighted accordingly. *All* IBAs need to be protected, but even greater priority needs to be given to those containing EDGE species, some of which are not yet officially protected!

I suggest that dedicated research on the Data Deficient species mentioned in my list, African River Martin, Maned Owl and Emerald Starling, should be a priority. In the case of Emerald Starling, even the species’ systematic placement is unclear.

It is important to conserve subspecies, recently split species and even populations, but it is most important to ensure that genera and families are conserved. Research and conservation efforts at



higher taxonomic levels should be prioritised (all other things being equal). If we continue to focus on the outer branches of the phylogeny (species), then we might conserve the greatest number of species, yet lose an unacceptable proportion of the 30% of avian genetic diversity contained in just 10% of the world's bird species (Jetz *et al.* 2014).

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# Recent Reports



These are largely unconfirmed records published for interest only; **records are mostly from 2014, with a few from earlier dates.** We thank all birders who have sent in their records and urge them to submit full details to the relevant national or regional organisations. It is suggested that observations of each species be compared with relevant literature to set new data in context and that observers who are unfamiliar with the status of birds in a particular country refer to the ABC country checklists ([www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

[africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) or more recent or appropriate sources before submitting records.

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Les observations ci-après sont en majeure partie non confirmées et sont publiées uniquement dans le but d'informer. **La plupart des données sont de 2014 ; quelques-unes sont plus anciennes.** Nous remercions tous les ornithologues qui ont pris la peine de nous faire parvenir leurs données

et nous recommandons de les envoyer, dûment documentées, aux organisations nationales ou régionales concernées. Il est conseillé de vérifier le statut des espèces observées dans la littérature appropriée, afin de mettre les nouvelles données en perspective, et de consulter notamment les 'checklists' des pays africains du ABC ([www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html](http://www.africanbirdclub.org/countries/checklists/index.html)) ou des sources plus récentes ou appropriées.

## Angola

Noteworthy records from September 2014 include **Finsch's Francolin** *Sceloptila finschi* at Tundavala, **Blue Quail** *Synoicus adansonii*, **Pallid Honeyguide** *Indicator meliphilus*, **Brazza's Martin** *Phedina brazzae*, **Black-necked Eremomela** *Eremomela atricollis*, **Margaret's Batis** *Batis margaritae*, **Bocage's Weaver** *Ploceus temporalis* and **Locust Finch** *Paludipasser locustella* in the Huambo Highlands of Mount Moco and environs, and **Bates's Sunbird** *Cinnyris batesi* north of Kalandula Falls (MM).

A **Pennant-winged Nightjar** *Caprimulgus vexillarius* was photographed off Angola at 10°47'24.5"S 00°19'46.5"W—i.e. c.1,500 km offshore—on 26 November 2014 (DH; see photo at <https://twitter.com/dhitchcox/status/537753666900733952>).

## Azores

In the period August–December 2014 the following were reported. Firsts for the archipelago include a **Barred Warbler** *Sylvia nisoria* on Flores on 23 September and a **Northern Shrike** *Lanius borealis* on Corvo on 18–30 October at least. A **Twite** *Linaria flavirostris* on Flores

on 15 October would also be a first, if accepted.

A **Swinhoe's Storm-petrel** *Oceanodroma monorhis* was photographed during a pelagic off Graziosa on 27 August. A dark and a pale morph **Trindade** (=Herald) **Petrel** *Pterodroma arminjoniana* 15 nautical miles west of Faial on 23 August constituted the 11th record for the Azores. A **Pied-billed Grebe** *Podilymbus podiceps* was (still) present at Lagoa Azul, São Miguel, throughout the period, with another at Lagoa das Furnas from mid November until the end of the year. A **Squacco Heron** *Ardeola ralloides* was seen on Santa Maria on 7 November. A **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* first noted on Corvo on 3 October was found dead on 7th; one was on Flores on 2 October and another on São Miguel on 9–13 October. A juvenile **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* was observed on Flores on 17–19 October and a **Northern Harrier** *C. cyaneus hudsonicus* on Santa Maria on 26–31 December. On Corvo, a **Corn Crane** *Crex crex* was seen on 12 and 15 October and a **Spotted Crane** *Porzana porzana* on 18 October. Single **American Coots** *Fulica americana* were noted on Pico

on 20 November, Terceira on 30 November and Faial on 1 December.

**Eurasian Dotterels** *Eudromias morinellus* were found on Santa Maria on 26 September (two), 14 October (one) and 26–31 December (up to six), and on Corvo on 15–24 October (one) and 24 December (one). **American Golden Plovers** *Pluvialis dominica* were observed on Terceira on 28 September, 5 October and 13–31 December, and on Corvo on 10 October. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *P. fulva* was reported on Santa Maria on 26 September and 14 October. Up to two **Buff-breasted Sandpipers** *Calidris subruficollis* were on Flores on 1–2 October. **Jack Snipes** *Lymnocyrtus minimus* were seen on Corvo on 25 October and Terceira on 7 December. **Wilson's Snipes** *Gallinago delicata* were reported on Corvo on 12–25 October, Flores on 21 October, Pico on 20 November, Terceira on 10–29 October and 7 December, and Santa Maria on 18 September–15 October. A long-staying **Hudsonian Whimbrel** *Numenius hudsonicus* was still present at Cabo da Praia, Terceira, at the end of October, with another at Porto Pim, Faial, on 16 December. The long-staying **Short-billed Dowitcher**



*Limnodromus griseus* remained at Cabo da Praia throughout the period, whilst a **Long-billed Dowitcher** *L. scolopaceus* was claimed from Corvo on 31 October. A **Willet** *Tringa semipalmata* remained at Ponta Delgado, São Miguel, from 23 September until the end of the year, a **Green Sandpiper** *T. ochropus* on Santa Maria on 26 September–15 October, and a **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* on Terceira on 17–23 October. Three **Franklin's Gulls** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* were reported from Santa Maria on 26 September. For the first time, a pair of **Sooty Terns** *Onychoprion fuscatus* on Ilhéu da Praia successfully raised young in 2014. A **Forster's Tern** *Sterna forsteri* was noted on São Miguel on 17 November.

On Corvo, up to three **Eurasian Collared Doves** *Streptopelia decaocto* were located on 12–13 October, a **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** *Coccyzus americanus* on 20–21 October and a **Chimney Swift** *Chaetura pelagica* on 28–29 October. A **Snowy Owl** *Bubo scandiacus* was (still) occasionally reported on Flores between August and December, with another report on Corvo on 5–7 October.

A **Eurasian Skylark** *Alauda arvensis* was on São Miguel on 19 October and up to six on Santa Maria on 6–7 November and 19 December. On Corvo, up to two **American Cliff Swallows** *Petrochelidon pyrrhonota* were seen on 4–5 October. A **White Wagtail** *Motacilla alba* was on Terceira on 30 September–9 October, with single **Yellow Wagtails** *M. flava* on Corvo on 8–11 October and São Miguel on 28 December. **Tree Pipits** *Anthus trivialis* on Corvo on 27 and 29 October were the second and third for the Azores. **American Buff-bellied Pipits** *A. r. rubescens* were seen on Corvo (up to six in October) and Santa Maria (in November). A **Fieldfare** *Turdus pilaris* was observed on Santa Maria on 24 December, a **Eurasian Wren** *Troglodytes troglodytes* on São Miguel on 7–8 November, and a **Sedge Warbler** *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus* on Terceira on 28 October.

On Corvo, a **Willow Warbler** *Phylloscopus trochilus* was recorded on 9–18 October, a **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* on 26 October (the fourth for the archipelago), one or more **Common Redpolls** *Acanthis flammea* on 16–29 October, and a **Lapland Bunting** *Calcarius lapponicus* on 10 and 17 October.

Other vagrant American passerines included a **Philadelphia Vireo** *Vireo philadelphicus* on Corvo on 11–18 October; **Red-eyed Vireos** *V. olivaceus* on Corvo (up to six), Flores and Terceira in October; a **Grey-cheeked Thrush** *Catharus minimus* on Corvo on 24, 25 and 28 October; **Scarlet Tanagers** *Piranga olivacea* on Flores on 8–12 October and Corvo on 9–30 October (up to three); up to two **Rose-breasted Grosbeaks** *Pheucticus ludovicianus* on Corvo on 9–15 October; two **Indigo Buntings** *Passerina cyanea* on Corvo on 9–10 October; a **Bobolink** *Dolichonyx orizyvorus* on Flores on 8–12 October and Corvo on 10–11 October; up to three **Black-and-white Warblers** *Mniotilta varia* on Corvo on 15–28 October; a **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* on Corvo on 12–18 October; **Northern Parulas** *Setophaga americana* on Corvo on 12, 14 and 24 October; a **Blackpoll Warbler** *S. striata* on Corvo on 20 October and Flores on 22 October; and the seventh **Black-throated Green Warbler** *S. virens*, also on Corvo, on 19–24 October (per *azoresbird sightings.blogspot.com* and *Dutch Birding* 36: 340–350, 406–420).

## Benin

In the Plaine du Sô, Basse Vallée de l'Ouémé, a **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* and at least five singing **Little Rush Warblers** *Bradypertus baboecala* were observed on 30 November 2014 (BP); both species have been recorded at this site before (cf. *Bull. ABC* 17: 240; 20: 94 & 217) and are probably regular there.

## Botswana

The following were reported in June–December 2014. The first **Pied Wheatear** *Oenanthe pleschanka* for Botswana, and only the second for

southern Africa, was photographed c.1.2 km west of Chobe Game Lodge, near Kasane, on 1 December (RdT). A **Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis* photographed in Chobe National Park on 11 July (PR, PM) was initially thought to be the first for the country and for the southern African subregion, until other photographs materialised (e.g. from Kalagadi Transfrontier Park, south-west Botswana, in June 2001 and two others from the Caprivi Strip, Namibia); the species normally ranges to south-west Angola.

A **Eurasian Honey Buzzard** *Pernis apivorus* was at Kasane on 7 December (per TH). An immature **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus* in Northern Tuli Game Reserve, eastern Botswana, on 26 November (SH) was apparently the first for the subregion in 2014, following three records in 2013 (one in Botswana in February and two in South Africa in May and December; per TH). An overwintering **White Stork** *Ciconia ciconia* was at Lake Xau on 20–21 August (CBr). Three **Grey Crowned Cranes** *Balearica regulorum* were at Kasane Seep on 11 July; presumably the same three were seen regularly on Sedudu Island in July–September (PZ). In Maun, a pair of **Rosy-faced Lovebirds** *Agapornis roseicollis*, part of a feral population, was nest prospecting on 23 November (MMu). A **Schalow's Tauraco** *Tauraco schalowi* and six **Trumpeter Hornbills** *Bycanistes bucinator* were observed at Mowana Lodge, Kasane, on 10 October (PZ).

Scarce Palearctic waders included **Sanderlings** *Calidris alba* at Broadhurst sewage ponds, Gaborone, on 24 October (two; TH), on the Nhabe River in late October (one; CM) and with African Skimmers *Rynchops flavirostris* on a sandbank in the Chobe River within Chobe National Park on 5 November (one; EM); two **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* at Nata Sanctuary on 23 August (CBr); a **Whimbrel** *Numenius phaeopus* at Lake Ngami on 25 October (KO, MO); **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* on the Boro River north of Maun on 26 October (one; PHa, KO, MMu), at

Kasane sewage ponds on 4 November (three; *EM*) and at Limpopo Lipadi Game Reserve in the Tuli Block on 20 November (one; per *TH*); and a **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* at Lake Ngami on 25 October (*KO*, *MO*), with another on a sandbank in the Chobe River near Kasane on 17 November (*LF*). An immature **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was photographed at Shakawe, in the north, on 2 November (*EM*, *AV*).

In late December, 17,700 **Black-winged Pratincoles** *Glareola nordmanni*, a globally significant number, were counted among c.30,000 waterbirds at Lake Xau. Also there were two **Grey Plovers** *Pluvialis squatarola*, a **Common Ringed Plover** *Charadrius hiaticula*, a **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata*, two **African Crakes** *Crex egregia*, an **Osprey** *Pandion haliaetus* and six **Yellow Wagtails** *Motacilla flava*, amid 1,100 egrets *Egretta* sp. (*CBr*). A **Collared Palm Thrush** *Cichladusa arquata* was present at Nata Lodge in late December (per *AR*); although recorded previously in Nata village, this species is rare away from Kasane (per *ST*).

## Cameroon

Records from the period July–December 2014 include a group of five **Fawn-breasted Waxbills** *Estrilda paludicola*, discovered on the Kadei River floodplain on 16 September—this is the first record for Cameroon (*ML*, *MvB*). A **Hooded Vulture** *Necrosyrtes monachus* was 15 km south-west of Yaoundé in mid-December, with another near

Soa, north-east of Yaoundé, on 24 December; the species may be regular in the area in the dry season (*RF*). A pair of **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* was discovered in an abandoned quarry in Yaoundé on 30 August; the pair exhibited breeding behaviour and has been seen regularly since (Fig. 1). A **Barn Owl** *Tyto alba* was observed in Yokadouma on 15 September (*ML*, *MvB*).

A group of four **Ethiopian Swallows** *Hirundo aethiopica* stayed around Yaoundé Golf Club on 5–27 July; this is the first record for Yaoundé. **Wire-tailed Swallows** *H. smithii* and **Rock Martins** *Ptyonoprogne fuligula* were present near Ebolowa in August, as well as breeding **Gosling's Apalises** *Apalis goslingi* (*ML*, *MvB*). Pairs of **Long-legged Pipits** *Anthus pallidiventris* were found at Yemekom on 26 October and at Obala on 13 December (*J-BD*, *BP*). An immature **Eastern Olivaceous Warbler** *Iduna pallida* was identified in Douala on 2 November; this is the second coastal record for Cameroon (*J-BD*). A short visit to Lobeke National Park in September produced **Willcocks's Honeyguide** *Indicator willcocksi*, **Dja River Warbler** *Bradypterus grandis* and **Preuss's Weaver** *Ploceus preussi*. A pair of **Grey-headed Olivebacks** *Nesocharis capistrata* at Obala on 13 December was the southernmost record in Cameroon (*J-BD*, *BP*).

## Canary Islands

The first **Eastern Bonelli's Warbler** *Phylloscopus orientalis* for the archipelago was heard and photographed at Barranco de la Torre, Fuerteventura, on 13 June (per *Dutch Birding* 36: 274). Other records from June–December 2014 include the following. **Swinhoe's Storm-petrels** *Oceanodroma monorhis* were photographed during pelagics off Lanzarote on 16 August and 11 September (per *Dutch Birding* 36: 342). An adult female **Blue-winged Teal** *Spatula discors* was at a small dam at Ricasa, Tenerife, in November–December (*RB* & *ES*). A flock of six **Gadwall** *Mareca strepera*—an irregular winter visitor to the archipelago—was found at



**Figure 2.** Juvenile Glossy Ibis / Ibis falcinelle *Plegadis falcinellus*, Las Galletas, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 14 September 2014 (Rubén Barone)



**Figure 3.** Juvenile Pectoral Sandpiper / Bécasseau tacheté *Calidris melanotos*, Las Galletas, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 2 November 2014 (Rubén Barone)

Las Martelas, La Palma, on 6–7 November (per *lapalmabirds.blogspot.com*). A juvenile **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was photographed at El Médano, Tenerife, on 1 October (per *avescanarias.blogspot.com*). A juvenile **Glossy Ibis** *Plegadis falcinellus* was observed at Las Galletas, Tenerife, in September (Fig. 2; *RB et al.*), with another at Las Martelas, La Palma, from 27 September until at least 7 October (per *lapalmabirds.blogspot.com*); the species is an irregular winter visitor to the Canaries. A **Eurasian Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia*, colour-ringed in the Netherlands, was photographed near the airport on La Palma on 5 October (per *lapalmabirds.blogspot.com*).



**Figure 1.** Peregrine Falcon / Faucon pèlerin *Falco peregrinus*, Yaoundé, Cameroon, 6 September 2014 (Marc Languy)





**Figure 4.** Juvenile Lesser Yellowlegs / Chevalier à pattes jaunes *Tringa flavipes*, Las Maretas de El Río, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 2 November 2014 (Rubén Barone)



**Figure 5.** Wilson's Phalarope / Phalarope de Wilson *Steganopus tricolor*, El Médano, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 2 November 2014 (Rubén Barone)



**Figure 6.** Common Kingfisher / Martin-pêcheur d'Europe *Alcedo atthis*, Tejina ponds, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 22 September 2014 (Rubén Barone)

A **Semipalmated Sandpiper** *Calidris pusilla* was photographed at Fuencaliente, La Palma, on 6 September. Single juvenile **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* were recorded on La Palma (at Las Martelas on 10 September), Lanzarote (at Tías Golf on 14–18 September and Arrecife on 28



**Figure 7.** Juvenile Citrine Wagtail / Bergeronnette citrine *Motacilla citreola*, Las Galletas, Tenerife, Canary Islands, 3 October 2014 (Rubén Barone)

September) and Tenerife (at Las Galletas, from October until at least 2 November; Fig. 3)—this American vagrant has become almost regular in autumn. **White-rumped Sandpipers** *C. fuscicollis* were photographed on Gran Canaria (two at Juncalillo del Sur on 20 October; one at Maspalomas on 23 October) and La Palma (two at Fuencaliente on 21–22 October; one at Las Martelas on 22 October). Single juvenile **Lesser Yellowlegs** *Tringa flavipes* were observed on Tenerife (at El Médano on 8 October and Las Maretas de El Río on 2 November; Fig. 4) and Lanzarote (at Órzola on 24 October) (per *avescanarias.blogspot.com*). A **Wilson's Phalarope** *Steganopus tricolor* was present at El Médano, Tenerife, from 28 October until 9 November at least (Fig. 5; RC & RB) and a third-winter **Herring Gull** *Larus argentatus* at Fuencaliente, La Palma, on 22 December (per *lapalmabirds.blogspot.com*).

An adult female **Common Kingfisher** *Alcedo atthis* was seen at Tejina ponds, Tenerife, on 22–23 September (Fig. 6; RB, BR & RC). A juvenile **Citrine Wagtail** *Motacilla citreola* was at Tías Golf, Lanzarote, on 23 September (per *avescanarias.blogspot.com*), with another at Las Galletas, Tenerife, on 29 September–3 October (Fig. 7; RJo & RB). A **Saharan Olivaceous Warbler** *Iduna pallida reiseri*, photographed at Barranco de la Torre, Fuerteventura, on 14 June, was the first for the

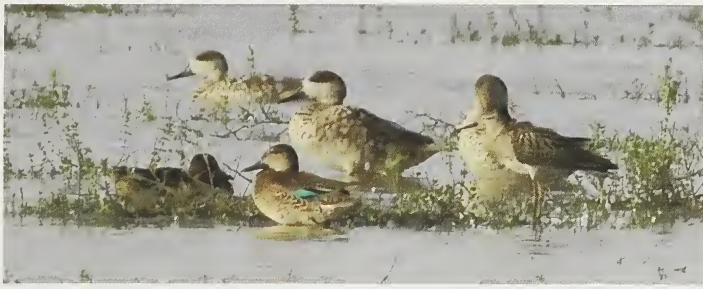
Canaries (per *Dutch Birding* 36: 275). A **Little Bunting** *Emberiza pusilla* was photographed on La Graciosa on 31 October (JS per *avescanarias.blogspot.com*)

## Cape Verde Islands

Noteworthy documented records from 2014 up to November have been published in Hazevoet, C. J. 2014. Eighth report on birds from the Cape Verde Islands, including records of nine taxa new to the archipelago. *Zool. Caboverdiana* 5: 29–56 (freely downloadable at the Sociedade Caboverdiana de Zoologia website [www.scvz.org](http://www.scvz.org)); see also Africa Round-up in this issue. An additional record is that of a **European Spoonbill** *Platalea leucorodia* observed at Rabil Lagoon, Boavista, on 7–8 November, which was ringed as a pullus in the Camargue, southern France, on 30 May 2013 (GO & HD).

## Chad

Three field surveys by the Sahara Conservation Fund and the Zoological Society of London were carried out in Chad in September 2013, January–February 2014 and September 2014. Details of the 259 species observed during these surveys have been posted on the West African Bird Database (WABDaB; <http://www.wabdab.org/db/>). Unusual records include c.20–30 **Great White Pelicans** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* on top of the isolated volcanic plug at Abtouyou (11°58'60"N 18°04'00"E), a site which also produces regular sightings of **Fox Kestrel** *Falco alopecurus*. In September 2014, **Pink-backed Pelicans** *P. rufescens* were present with 1000s of waterfowl along the flooded waterways of Ouadi Rimé between Ati and Abéché, where a breeding colony containing >30 nests of **African Spoonbills** *Platalea alba* and 1000s of **Abdim's Storks** *Ciconia abdimii* was located; **White Storks** *C. ciconia* and **Marabou Storks** *Leptoptilos crumenifer* were also present. A pair of **Hottentot Teals** *Spatula hottentota* was photographed in the Bahr al Ghazal in September 2013.



**Figure 8.** Marbled Teals / Sarcelles marbrées *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Ouadi Kharma, Chad, 22 September 2014 (John Newby / Sahara Conservation Fund)



**Figure 9.** Black-tailed Godwit / Barge à queue noire *Limosa limosa*, Ouadi Kharma, Chad, 23 September 2014 (John Newby / Sahara Conservation Fund)



**Figure 10.** Red-necked Phalarope / Phalarope à bec étroit *Phalaropus lobatus*, Ouadi Kharma, Chad, 22 September 2014 (John Newby / Sahara Conservation Fund)

Among the many wetland birds along Ouadis Kharma and Achim in the northern Ouadi Rimé–Ouadi Achim Game Reserve in September 2014, the more unusual, indicating the importance of these seasonal wetlands, included at least three **Marbled Teals** *Marmaronetta angustirostris* (Fig. 8), groups of **Kittlitz's Plovers** *Charadrius pecuarius* and **White-fronted Plovers** *C. marginatus*, two **Eurasian Curlews** *Numenius arquata*, two **Black-tailed Godwits** *Limosa limosa* (Fig. 9), 32 **Spotted Redshanks** *Tringa erythropus*, a **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres*, a **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* (Fig. 10), and one or two pairs of **Black Crowned Cranes** *Balearica pavonina*. Regular sightings of **Clapperton's Francolin** *Pternistis clappertoni* and **Helmeted Guineafowl** *Numida meleagris* in the same wadis attest to their importance for terrestrial species as well. These unique but fragile woodlands are increasingly threatened by pastoral

development, settlements and clearance for agriculture.

In both September visits **Beaudouin's Snake Eagles** *Circaetus beaudouini* were noted regularly up to 14°45'N, where they occur alongside Palearctic **Short-toed Snake Eagles** *C. gallicus*. As in previous dry-season surveys, only the latter were seen at these latitudes in January–February. Two **Brown Snake Eagles** *C. cinereus* were unusually far north along Ouadi Kharma in September 2013, as were single immature **African Hawk Eagles** *Aquila spilogaster* in September 2013 and 2014; an older bird was also observed hunting around a colony of >100 nests of **Black-headed Herons** *Ardea melanocephala* in the Bahr al Ghazal. A **Eurasian Hobby** *Falco subbuteo* flew over the Bahr al Ghazal on 22 September 2013. **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were passing regularly along the Chari River in Chad's capital N'Djaména in January 2014. The first records of



**Figure 11.** Bronze-winged Courser / Courvite à ailes bronzées *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus*, Ouadi Kharma, Chad, 22 September 2014 (Tim Wacher / Zoological Society of London)

**Bronze-winged Courser** *Rhinoptilus chalcopterus* were made in Ouadi Kharma during both September visits (Fig. 11); although not found there in previous surveys, the species was heard calling regularly at night and loose groups of up to 15 were observed. A pair of **Temminck's Coursers** *Cursorius temminckii* was recorded for the first time in Ouadi Achim in September 2014. A group of five **Short-eared Owls** *Asio flammeus* was sheltering from a dust storm in grassland north-west of Salal in February 2014. In September 2013, a **Greyish Eagle Owl** *Bubo (africanus) cinerascens* was observed within a few kilometres of a pair of **Desert Eagle Owls** *B. ascalaphus* in Ouadi Rimé–Ouadi Achim Game Reserve, where **Golden Nightjars** *Caprimulgus eximius* were flushed several times by day during both wet-season visits; new crepuscular and nocturnal recordings of a rhythmic *pa-chuk, pa-chuk, ...* call made at several locations in the reserve, which is believed to be from Golden Nightjar (*cf. Bull. ABC* 18: 232) have produced sonograms provisionally indistinguishable from those of Red-necked Nightjar *C. ruficollis*, a species not yet listed for Chad. Also in the reserve, several mixed groups of swifts included a few **White-rumped Swifts** *Apus caffer* in September 2013. Tens of **Common Cuckoos** *Cuculus canorus* and hundreds of **Hoopoes** *Upupa epops* were present along Ouadi Kharma in September 2014. Also



there, a **Rufous-crowned Roller** *Coracias naevius* represented the northernmost record to date.

A **Greater Hoopoe Lark** *Alaemon alaudipes* was on its nest beside a tussock of dry grass just east of the Bahr al Ghazal on 20 September 2013. Small numbers of **Red-rumped Swallows** *Cecropis daurica* were noted at Ouadi Kharma in September 2014; although no features distinguishing them from the resident African form *domicella* were seen, the northerly location suggested Palearctic migrants. **Red-pate Cisticolas** *Cisticola rupestris* were frequently observed in west-central Chad, in breeding and non-breeding plumages, in both seasons. An **Orphean Warbler** *Sylvia hortensis* was present at Noukou on 31 January 2014. **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* including bright, white-cheeked males, perhaps suggestive of the eastern race *rufidorsalis* are routinely observed at nearly all towns and settlements, and even some remote borehole sites, throughout central Chad. At least two breeding male **Red-headed Queleas** *Quelea erythrops* were present unusually far north near Mongo in September 2013. A **Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting** *Fringillaria (Emberiza) tahapisi* attracted to a waterhole near Goz al Fal in the same month was very far from rocky outcrops. Outside the reporting period above, a **Great Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* was photographed in the south-west of Ouadi Rimé–Ouadi Achim Game Reserve in September 2011 (JG, JN, TR, TW).

### Congo-Brazzaville

Two firsts for the country were noted in Tchimpounga Nature Reserve, c.40 km north of Pointe Noire, in 2014: a juvenile **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circaetus cinereus* in January and a **Grey Wagtail** *Motacilla cinerea* on 2 November. Other noteworthy records from the reserve include a **Great Snipe** *Gallinago media* and a **Thick-billed Cuckoo** *Pachycocyx audeberti* in January, with a **Common Whitethroat** *Sylvia communis* mist-netted in

the same month; a **Common Kestrel** *Falco tinnunculus* in June; and a **Vermiculated Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia bouvieri*, four **Black Spinetails** *Telacanthura melanopygia*, two **Eurasian Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* and two **Cuckoo Finches** *Anomalospiza imberbis* in October. In July, 20 **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus* were seen flying north over the sea, while a **Damara Tern** *Sternula balaenarum* was at the Kouilou River mouth. An older record from Tchimpounga concerned a **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* seen in October 2013 (MW).

A small group of **Black-chinned Weavers** *Ploceus nigrimentus* was seen on 16 October near Masa, on the Batéké Plateau (ML). **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* were regularly seen in the Plateau Ville neighbourhood of Brazzaville in 2014 (NH); the species' occurrence in the city was not mapped in Borrow & Demey (2014. *Birds of Western Africa*. Second edn).

### Côte d'Ivoire

A pair of **Double-toothed Barbets** *Pogonornis (=Lybius) bidentatus* was photographed near Assouinde on 13 July 2014 (Fig. 12); there are few records from the coast. A visit to a site near Bouaké where a flock of six **Piapiacs** *Ptilostomus afer* was observed in wooded savanna in November 2013, produced c.10



**Figure 12.** Double-toothed Barbet / Barbican bidenté *Pogonornis bidentatus*, near Assouinde, 13 July 2014 (Lionel Sineux)



**Figure 13.** Greater Sand Plover / Gravelot de Leschenault *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Sakania, Katanga, DR Congo, 15 October 2014 (Nigel Voaden)



**Figure 14.** Black-tailed Godwit / Barge à queue noire *Limosa limosa*, Sakania, Katanga, DR Congo, 7 September 2014 (Nigel Voaden)

Piapiacs, suggesting a southward range extension (LS).

### DR Congo

In July–December 2014, the following noteworthy species were reported from Sakania, in the extreme south-east of Katanga Province, near the border with Zambia. The first record of **Greater Sand Plover** *Charadrius leschenaultii* for the country was an adult photographed on 15 October (Fig. 13). An adult **Black-tailed Godwit** *Limosa limosa* photographed on 7 September (Fig. 14) may constitute the first record for Katanga; the species is not mentioned in Louette & Hasson (2011. *Birds of Katanga*). An adult **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* on 19 September was also a first provincial record.

The second Katanga record of **Black Stork** *Ciconia nigra* was an adult photographed on 20 July (Fig. 15); the first was seen at the same site in 2013 (cf. *Bull. ABC* 21: 99).



**Figure 15.** Black Stork / Cigogne noire *Ciconia nigra*, Sakania, Katanga, DR Congo, 20 July 2014 (Nigel Voaden)



**Figure 16.** Sanderling / Bécasseau sanderling *Calidris alba*, Sakania, Katanga, DR Congo, 11 November 2014 (Nigel Voaden)

**Sanderling** *Calidris alba* sightings involved two juveniles on 19 October (photographed), an adult on 9–20 November (photographed) and a second adult on 20–23 November (Fig. 16); there is just one previous record for the province: of the two specimens reported by Schouteden (1971. *La Faune Ornithologique de la Province du Katanga*) and held in the Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren, Belgium, only one had been correctly identified (M. Louette *in litt.* 2014).

Other records of note included a very early **Yellow Wagtail** *Motacilla flava* on 20 September (three days prior to the earliest record in Dowsett *et al.* 2008. *The Birds of Zambia*). Heavy passage of **Common House Martins** *Delichon urbicum* culminated in a peak count of 800 on 28 September. A **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was seen on 22 November (NV).

In Bombo-Lumene Hunting Reserve, east of Kinshasa on the Batéké Plateau, territorial **White-**



**Figure 17.** White-headed Robin Chat / Cossyphie à tête blanche *Cossypha heinrichi* Bombo-Lumene, DR Congo, 23 August 2014 (R.-M. Lafontaine, R. C. Beudels & H. Robert / IRSNB-Conservation Biology Unit)

**headed Robin Chats** *Cossypha heinrichi* were seen at three different locations on 21 August; one was mist-netted two days later (Fig. 17). Also there were **Miombo Wren Warbler** *Calamonastes undosus* and **Black-collared Bulbul** *Neolestes torquatus* (ML).

## Egypt

**Saunders's Terns** *Sternula saundersi* bred again at Ras Sudr, Sinai, where breeding was first recorded in 2012 (cf. *Bull. ABC* 21: 99; per *Dutch Birding* 36: 273).

## Ethiopia

Records from October–December 2014, with one from March 2014, include the following. A **honey buzzard** *Pernis* sp. photographed at Wondo Genet on 2 November (Fig. 18), was subsequently identified as a somewhat unusual-looking adult female European Honey Buzzard *Pernis apivorus* or a possible hybrid European × Oriental Honey Buzzard *P. ptilorhynchus*. An immature **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus*—a rarely recorded Palearctic migrant—was observed at Awassa on 1 November (Fig. 19; per VA). **Amur Falcons** *F. amurensis* were noted near Lake Langano on 27 November (one), near Goba on 30 November (an adult female; Fig. 20) and over the Liben Plains on 3 December (at least 60 with c.40 Lesser Kestrels *F. naumanni*); this species is rare in southern Ethiopia. Also on the Liben Plains was an adult **Sooty Falcon** *F. concolor*—a rarely recorded species' (EW).

Four **cliff swallows** *Petrochelidon* sp. in flight, matching the illustrations of the unidentified cliff swallow in Redman *et al.* (2009. *Birds of the Horn of Africa*), were observed at length in the Awash gorge near the old Kereyou Lodge on 25 November; some (immatures?) had a faint, slightly browner panel on the upper forewing. They were



**Figure 18.** Honey buzzard *Pernis* sp., Wondo Genet, Ethiopia, 2 November 2014; a somewhat unusual-looking adult female European Honey Buzzard *P. apivorus* or a possible hybrid European × Oriental Honey Buzzard *P. ptilorhynchus* (Svetlana Ashby)

Bondrée *Pernis* sp., Wondo Genet, Éthiopie, 2 novembre 2014 ; soit une Bondrée apivore *P. apivorus* femelle adulte au plumage quelque peu inhabituel, soit un hybride Bondrée apivore × Bondrée orientale *P. ptilorhynchus* (Svetlana Ashby)





**Figure 19.** Immature Red-footed Falcon / Faucon kobez *Falco vespertinus*, Awassa, Ethiopia, 1 November 2014 (Svetlana Ashby)



**Figure 20.** Adult female Amur Falcon *Falco amurensis*, near Goba, Ethiopia, 30 November 2014 (Eddie Williams)  
Faucon de l'Amour *Falco amurensis* femelle adulte, près de Goba, Éthiopie, 30 novembre 2014 (Eddie Williams)

somewhat reminiscent of Preuss's Cliff Swallow *P. preussi* although clearly not identical. A **White-tailed Swallow** *Hirundo megaensis* was observed on the Liben Plains near Negele on 3 December; this endemic is rarely recorded so far east (EW).

A visit to the south-west on 10–22 October 2014 produced several records of interest (cf. Ash & Atkins 2009. *Birds of Ethiopia & Eritrea*). A first-year **Sooty Falcon** *F. concolor* flew over Nechisar Plain on 13 October—an early date and a new locality (RD). **Violet Wood-hoopoe** *Phoeniculus damarensis*, considered unconfirmed for the country, was curiously the only wood-hoopoe identified in the extreme south-west, at Turmi, Murle and nearby on the edge of Lake Dipa (16–18 October). There were previously no October records for several species seen on this trip, including **Red-chested Cuckoo** *Cuculus solitarius* (singing at Murle on the Omo River and at Lake Dipa, 16–17 October), **Pink-breasted Lark** *Mirafra poecilosterna* (several between Turmi and Murle, 16 October) and **Magpie Starling** *Speculipastor bicolor* (several pairs near and at Murle, 16–17 October). Noteworthy records from the Gibé scarp include small numbers of **Marsh Warblers** *Acrocephalus palustris* alongside many **Thrush Nightingales** *Luscinia luscinia* on 10 October; a **Wilson's Indigobird** *Vidua wilsoni* in breeding dress singing near the Gibé River, its song including imitations of that of

Bar-breasted Firefinch *Lagonosticta rufopicta*; and a **Barka Indigobird** *V. larvaticola* singing in woodland, its song including imitations of the calls of Black-faced Firefinch *L. larvata* (seen nearby). A pair of **Jameson's Firefinches** *L. rhodopareia* was observed in thornbush on the Uajo River, near Lake Abaya, on 12 October, with a male also there on 19 October. On the latter date, an indigobird singing in a small tree was joined by a male firefinch; presumably this was a **Purple Indigobird** *V. purpurascens*, hitherto unrecorded in Ethiopia. A **Yellow White-eye** *Zosterops senegalensis* near Murle on 16 October represents a south-east range extension. A **Northern Stripe-breasted Seedeater**

*Crithagra striatipictus* was singing at Kanta Lodge, Karat-Konso, on 14 October—a new locality for this localised species; its ecology and song differ greatly from that of the miombo endemic Stripe-breasted Seedeater *C. reichardi* with which it was previously lumped (FD-L & RD).

## Equatorial Guinea

On Bioko, the first **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* for the island was observed on the southern shore on 28 October 2014 (DC). During a visit in December to mainland Río Muni, several species were observed that appear to be additions to the country list, including **Spectacled Weaver** *Ploceus ocularis* at Bata and **Pel's Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia peli*, **Lyre-tailed Honeyguide** *Melichneutes robustus*, **Ethiopian Swallow** *Hirundo aethiopica*, **Yellow-throated Leaflove** *Atimastillas flavicollis* and **Magpie Mannikin** *Spermestes fringilloides* near Nsork, in the south-east; details will be published in due course (JC, LP & JW).

## The Gambia

A probable juvenile **Preuss's Cliff Swallow** *Petrochelidon preussi* was observed near Tendaba on 27 November 2014 (GS); this species does not (yet) figure on the country list, although probabilities were reported as long ago as February 1994. As the species has substantially expanded its range in recent decades, its presence would not be too surprising.



**Figure 21.** Lappet-faced Vulture / Vautour oricou *Torgos tracheliotos*, Siguiri, Guinea, 13 January 2011 (Arne Moeller)

## Guinea

A record from 2011 of a **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotos* has only recently come to light: the bird was photographed at Siguiri, north of Kankan in the north-east, on 13 January (Fig. 21; *AM*); this is an addition to the country list.

## Kenya

The following reports are from the period July–December 2014. A **Yellow-billed Duck** *Anas undulata* of the northern race *ruppelli* was discovered with local birds in Nairobi on 3 October. A subadult **Eastern Chanting Goshawk** *Melierax poliopterus* was observed in Nairobi National Park (=NP) on 14 July, following an adult in May—the first records for Nairobi in seven years. A juvenile **Greater Spotted Eagle** *Clanga clanga*, one of the rarest migrant eagles in Kenya, was photographed at Naivasha on 30 November. At least five **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* were photographed at Bura Irrigation Scheme on 17–19 December; this species is rare in the west. An adult male **Pygmy Falcon** *Polibierax semitorquatus* was observed in Nairobi NP on 4 October—the first for this well-watched site in more than 20 years.

At least 40 **Black Crowned Cranes** *Balearica pavonina* were seen along the road north of Todonyang', Turkana, on 15 August; there are few reports from this remote area. A **Lesser Sand Plover** *Charadrius mongolus* was reported from Nairobi NP on 20 September; the species is uncommon inland and this is the first record for the park. Also there was a **Long-toed Lapwing** *Vanellus crassirostris* of the southern race *leucopterus*—a rare wanderer to Kenya—on 16 November. Still in Nairobi NP, an **African Skimmer** *Rynchops flavirostris* on 4 October was only the third record for Nairobi, whilst three **African Olive Pigeons** *Columba arquatrix* on 30 July were the first in more than 15 years. A **Great Spotted Cuckoo** *Clamator glandarius*, an uncommon species on the coast, was found dead at Vipingo, Kilifi, on 22 September. A **Eurasian**

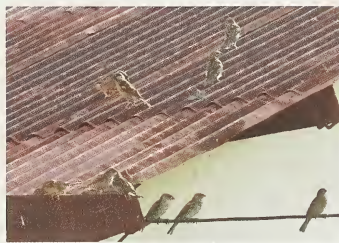
**Roller** *Coracias garrulus* in Nairobi NP on 4 October is a very early date. A **Eurasian Wryneck** *Jynx torquilla* was photographed on Lolldaiga Hills, Laikipia, on 28 November; this species is recorded only every few years. An **Icterine Warbler** *Hippolais icterina* was observed along Dagoretti Road, Nairobi, on 20 October; there are only a handful of records for Nairobi. An adult **Lesser Grey Shrike** *Lanius minor* was in Nairobi NP on 18 October; this species is rare during its southward migration. A flock of six **White-crested Helmetshrikes** *Prionops plumatus* at the edge of the same park on 16 July is the first record for the site in more than 12 years (per *CJ*).

## Madagascar

A **Sandwich Tern** *Thalasseus sandvicensis* was photographed at the Betsiboka Estuary, Mahajanga, on 14 November 2014 (Fig. 22); there are only three previous records for Madagascar, in August 1990 and September 2008 (Safford & Hawkins 2013) and November 2013 (*Bull. ABC* 21: 103), and this appears



**Figure 22.** Sandwich Tern / Sterne caugek *Thalasseus sandvicensis*, Betsiboka Estuary, Mahajanga, Madagascar, 14 November 2014 (Raphaël Jordan)



**Figure 23.** House Sparrows / Moineaux domestiques *Passer domesticus*, Mahajanga harbour, Madagascar, 14 November 2014 (M. Quiblier)

to be the first to be documented photographically. In the harbour, at least 14 **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus*, among them three males, were found (Fig. 23; *RJ*, *CLQ*, *MQ*); the species is largely restricted to within 50 km of Toamasina on the east coast, with records in Tana in 2004 (but not since) and Antsirana in 2011 (Safford & Hawkins 2013).

## Madeira

The following records are from the period July–December 2014. A **Eurasian Wigeon** *Anas penelope* was at Lugar de Baixo on 30 October and a **Mute Swan** *Cygnus olor* at Porto Santo Golf Course on 13 September. Single **Eurasian Spoonbills** *Platalea leucorodia* were noted at Lugar de Baixo on 13 July, Machico on 23 July–13 August, Porto Santo Golf Course on 16 August–13 September, and Ribeira Brava on 4 October. A **Booted Eagle** *Hieraaetus pennatus* was observed at Caniçal on 12 August. Single **Peregrine Falcons** *Falco peregrinus* were reported from Monte on 24 August, Ribeira da Janela and Ponta Pargo on 9 October, Cabo Girão on 14 November, and Funchal on 10 December.

A **Stone-curlew** *Burhinus oedicnemus* was seen at Ponta do Pargo on 14 August and heard at Garajau on 28 August. Two **Black-winged Stilts** *Himantopus himantopus* were found at Machico on 13 August and Ribeira Brava on 16 August. Vagrant scolopacids included **White-rumped Sandpipers** *Calidris fuscicollis* at Machico on 18–22 October and Lugar de Baixo on 30 October–2 November; **Pectoral Sandpipers** *C. melanotos* at Ribeira Brava on 16 August and Porto Santo Golf Course on 13 September; a **Buff-breasted Sandpiper** *C. subruficollis* at Porto Moniz on 7–9 September; and a **Spotted Sandpiper** *Actitis macularia* also at Porto Moniz on 31 October. A **Glaucous Gull** *Larus hyperboreus* was observed at Santo da Serra Reservoir on 7 December. Single **Gull-billed Terns** *Gelochelidon nilotica* were noted at Lugar de Baixo on 11 August and Porto Moniz on



24 September and 9 October. Four **Black Terns** *Chlidonias niger* were at Porto Santo on 12 August.

At Ponta Pargo, three species of pipit were recorded: a **Tawny Pipit** *Anthus campestris* on 9 October, a **Tree Pipit** *A. trivialis* on 21 November and a **Meadow Pipit** *A. pratensis* on 10 December. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was discovered at Funchal Botanical Garden on 16 December and a **Snow Bunting** *Plectrophenax nivalis* at Ponta de São Lourenço on 14 December (per [www.madeirabirds.com](http://www.madeirabirds.com)).

## Morocco

The first **American Purple Gallinule** *Porphyrio martinicus* for the country was found at Kénitra on 15 November 2014; it was weak and taken into a garden, from where it flew off three days later. Two **European Shags** *Phalacrocorax aristotelis* of the coastal Moroccan race *riggenbachii* ('Moroccan Shag') were photographed among three pairs reportedly present at Tamri, north of Agadir, on 3 November. A first-year **Great Knot** *Calidris tenuirostris* photographed in a flock of up to six Red Knots *C. canutus* at Oued Souss, Agadir, on 8 November was the second for North Africa; the first was an adult in summer plumage at the same site on 27 August 1980. A **Yellow-browed Warbler** *Phylloscopus inornatus* was at Yasmina, Merzouga, Tafilalet, on 22 October (per *Dutch Birding* 36: 406–411).

## Mozambique

The following records are from October–December 2014. Pelagic trips out of Maputo produced at least ten **Sooty Terns** *Onychoprion fuscatus* on 2 November and a **Black-naped Tern** *Sterna sumatrana*, an east coast vagrant, as well as a probable **Tropical Shearwater** *Puffinus bailloni* on 22 November. During a fishing trip out of Maputo on 26 November four **European Storm-petrels** *Hydrobates pelagicus*, a rare species on the east coast, and three **Sooty Terns** were observed.

Single **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were

reported at Sena on 11 November, between Caia and Gorongosa on 12 November, over the Pungwe River floodplain, inland of Beira, on 6 December and at Catapu the next day. A **Crab-plover** *Dromas ardeola* was present at Ponta da Barra on 4 November. A **Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo** *Cercococcyx montanus* was photographed near Mphingwe camp, in central Mozambique, in December; although the species is probably observed annually, it is very infrequently photographed and often incorrectly identified. A flock of >20 **Olive Bee-eaters** *Merops superciliosus* was located in Machangulo Private Nature Reserve, just north of Maputo Special Elephant Reserve, on 7 October, well south of the species' range currently shown in most field guides, although it is suspected to be more regular in this area than previously thought. A **Böhm's Bee-eater** *M. boehmi* flew over the Gorongosa National Park access road on 14 December. A probable **Basra Reed Warbler** *Acrocephalus griseldis* was seen at the Zangue River bridge, south of Catapu, on 13 December (per *TH & AR*).

## Namibia

The most remarkable find during the period July–December 2014 was that of a juvenile **Red-necked Buzzard** *Buteo auguralis*, photographed at Buffalo Reserve, in the Caprivi Strip, on 28 July; although it was the first to be identified in the subregion, other records have subsequently come to light, including two from Namibia, at Ngepi Camp, western Caprivi, on 8 March 2009, and Mahango Game Reserve on 11 August 2012 (two additional records are from Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, South Africa, in August 2001, and Chobe National Park, Botswana, on 11 July 2014). A small and principally sedentary population occurs in southern Angola. This is the third species to be added to the southern African list (now comprising 968 species) in 2014, following the January records of Trindade (=Herald) Petrel *Pterodroma arminjoniana* off Eastern Cape, South Africa, and Red-tailed

Shrike *Lanius phoenicuroides* in Mozambique (cf. *Bull. ABC* 21: 244 & 247).

Other noteworthy records include a few **South African Shelducks** *Tadorna cana*, **White-backed Ducks** *Thalassornis leuconotus* and **Black-necked Grebes** *Podiceps nigricollis* c.20 km north of Gobabis, in the north, on 1 October—all slightly out of range according to the most recent distribution maps. Another **White-backed Duck** was at Gammams Water Treatment Works, Windhoek, on 12 October and 14 December—a very unusual species for the centre of the country. A **Slaty Egret** *Egretta vinaceigula* at Onesi Dam, near Ruacana, on 21 August, was well west of its normal range. A **Woolly-necked Stork** *Ciconia episcopus* was observed at Erindi Private Nature Reserve, north-east of Okahandja, in early December. **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported from Mahango Game Reserve on 2 November and 13 December, and from Etosha National Park and Waterberg Plateau Park in early December. A **Western Marsh Harrier** *Circus aeruginosus* flew over the rice paddies near Katima Mulilo Lodge, eastern Caprivi, on 9 December. A **Bateleur** *Terathopius ecaudatus* and a **Black Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter melanoleucus* just outside Swakopmund in mid September were of local interest.

A **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis* was found at Epelele Dam, 50 km east of Ruacana, on 11 December. Two **Eurasian Oystercatchers** *Haematopus ostralegus* were observed at Walvis Bay on 26 December, with a **Pacific Golden Plover** *Pluvialis fulva* also there on 15 November and 14 December. A **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* and a group of **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were found at a farm 50 km west of Windhoek on 27 December. Other waders of interest included a **Terek Sandpiper** *Xenus cinereus* at the Andoni Plains waterhole, Etosha National Park, on 20 August; a **Eurasian Curlew** *Numenius arquata* at Onesi Dam, Ovamboland, on 3 October; four **Ruddy Turnstones**

*Arenaria interpres* at Okondjatu, c.160 km west of Otjiwarongo, in the north, on 1 October; and up to 25 **Red-necked Phalaropes** *Phalaropus lobatus* at Walvis Bay Salt Works from late September until the end of the year.

#### A White-browed Coucal

*Centropus superciliosus* was reported from Omaruru, well south of its normal range, on 28 September. Also outside their usual range were a **Giant Kingfisher** *Megaceryle maxima* at Windhoek's Gammams Water Treatment Works on 14 December, and a **Karoo Thrush** *Turdus smithi* at Rossmund Golf Estate, Swakopmund, on 6 August. A **House Crow** *Corvus splendens*, first reported in May, was still at the Walvis Bay waterfront in late November. A report from 29 September of a '**Sweet Waxbill**' *Coccyzygia* sp. observed at Ruacana Falls, in the north, almost certainly referred to the form *bocagei*, endemic to West Angola and sometimes treated as a separate species (Angolan Waxbill or Angola Sweet); this taxon has been claimed from northern Namibia before but conclusive evidence of its occurrence has yet to be provided (per TH & AR).

#### Niger

Reports from the period July–December 2014 include the following. Expeditions organised by the Sahara Conservation Fund resulted in a second sighting of a



**Figure 25.** Spotted Crake / Marouette ponctuée *Porzana porzana*, Niamey, Niger, 6 October 2014 (Tim & Barbie Kusserow)

**Golden Eagle** *Aquila chrysaetos* at Termit, on 6 December (Fig. 24). A **Rüppell's Vulture** *Gyps rueppelli* at Gadafawa, just south of the Air, on 24 October, is the northernmost record in more than 30 years. At Gadabegi, an adult **Short-toed Snake Eagle** *Circaetus gallicus* and an adult **Beaudouin's Snake Eagle** *C. beaudouini* were photographed on 3 August, which proves that the two species can sometimes occur together (TR). A dependent young **Dwarf Bittern** *Ixobrychus sturmi* was observed in rice fields near Niamey on 10 October—the northernmost breeding record in Niger to date. Also there, a dead male **Spotted Crake** *Porzana porzana* was found on 6 October (Fig. 25); this is only the fourth or fifth record for Niger. An adult



**Figure 27.** European Nightjar / Engoulevent d'Europe *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Galmi, Niger, 22 October 2014 (David Kusserow)

**Barbary Falcon** *Falco (peregrinus) peregrinoides* photographed at Galmi on 3 December was the seventh record for Niger (Fig. 26). Also there was a **European Nightjar** *Caprimulgus europaeus* on 22 October (Fig. 27), three years to the day after the first records from Galmi; recent records from April–May 2012 demonstrate that Galmi is used as a staging area by this species on both its northbound and southbound migrations. **House Sparrows** *Passer domesticus* photographed in Mainé-Soroa on 31 October 2008 (DK) are clearly of a different subspecies to those in Chad photographed in September 2014 (per UL & JB).

#### Nigeria

In 2014, breeding was recorded for the first time in Nigeria for **Spot-breasted Ibis** *Bostrychia rara* (a nest containing one egg at Abo Ebam, Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State; Fig. 28) and **African Grass Owl** *Tyto capensis* (a nest with two chicks at 1,500 m in Becheve Nature Reserve, Obudu Plateau; Figs. 29–30); the latter is also the first record for the species in the country (PH).

Records from April 2013–July 2014 from CERCOPAN's Rhoko Camp, situated within the buffer



**Figure 24.** Golden Eagle / Aigle royal *Aquila chrysaetos*, Termit, Niger, 6 December 2014 (Thomas Rabeil / Sahara Conservation Fund)



**Figure 26.** Barbary Falcon / Faucon de Barbarie *Falco (peregrinus) peregrinoides*, Galmi, Niger, 3 December 2014 (Tim & Barbie Kusserow)





**Figure 28.** Spot-breasted Ibis *Bostrychia rara* nest with one egg, Abo Ebam, Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria, 7 November 2014 (Joseph Onoja)

Nid de l'Ibis vermiculé *Bostrychia rara* avec un œuf, Abo Ebam, Boki Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria, 7 novembre 2014 (Joseph Onoja)



**Figure 29.** African Grass Owl / Effraie du Cap *Tyto capensis*, Becheve Nature Reserve, Obudu Plateau, Nigeria, 6 November 2014 (Joseph Onoja)



**Figure 30.** African Grass Owl *Tyto capensis* chicks, Becheve Nature Reserve, Obudu Plateau, Nigeria, 6 November 2014 (Joseph Onoja)

Jeunes Effraies du Cap *Tyto capensis* au nid, Becheve Nature Reserve, Plateau d'Obudu, Nigeria, 6 novembre 2014 (Joseph Onoja)

zone of the Oban Division of Cross River National Park (CRNP), Cross River State, include the following.

**Black-eared Ground Thrush**

*Geokichla camaronensis*, a new species for Nigeria, was encountered on four occasions, including at least one recently fledged juvenile; this species is known from nearby Korup National Park, Cameroon (RM).

**Brown Nightjar** *Veles binotatus* was found to be resident; the species was

previously known from one other site in Nigeria, Erokhut Camp, also in the Oban Division of CRNP, in 2009 (PH, APL, RM). A **Buff-spotted Flufftail** *Sarothrura elegans* sang almost every night throughout the dry season from mid-December 2013 to early March 2014; there is only one previous record, of a bird taken at Ubiaja in April 1935 (Elgood *et al.* 1994. *The Birds of Nigeria*). **Yellow-footed Honeyguide** *Melignomon eisentrauti*, known previously only from Erokhut, in the Oban Division of CRNP, was recorded on several occasions in April–July 2014. A **Grey Ground Thrush** *Geokichla princei* was observed on 4 June 2013; there are only a handful of records in Nigeria, the most recent in 1997.

Other species that are rarely recorded in the country or are at the western edge of their range include the following. **White-crested Tiger Heron** *Tigriornis leucolopha* was seen twice at dusk in April–May 2013.

**Spot-breasted Ibises** *Bostrychia rara* flew in twos or threes over Rhoko Camp at dusk on three dates in February–April 2014. **Red-thighed Sparrowhawk** *Accipiter erythropus* was recorded approximately once per month. A pair of **Chestnut-flanked Sparrowhawks** *A. castanilius* displayed regularly in April–July 2013. **Crowned Eagle** *Stephanoaetus coronatus* was observed singly or in pairs, once four together; most records were in January–February 2014 when birds were often displaying above the forest. **Black Guineafowl** *Agelastes niger* was encountered regularly, being more conspicuous and vocal in the dry season. **Nkulengu Rail** *Himantornis haematopus* was particularly vocal at

night during the late dry season until the start of the rains (February–June 2014) when up to three pairs could be heard duetting. **Vermiculated Fishing Owl** *Scotopelia bouvieri*, **Akun Eagle Owl** *Bubo leucostictus* and **Sjöstedt's Owlet** *Glaucidium sjostedti* were found regularly throughout the year. One or two **Black Spinetails** *Telacanthura melanopygia* were frequent in April–early May 2013 and occasionally thereafter until mid July, with a pair in aerial display on 12 July; in 2014, there was only a single record, of one, on 21 April. **Bare-cheeked Trogon** *Apaloderma aequatoriale* was heard singing almost daily, especially during the dry season in late November–mid March. Up to six **Blue-moustached Bee-eaters** *Merops mentalis* were observed regularly at Ebontema Tourist Camp in late April–May 2013, with up to three there in October 2013–early April 2014; the species has not previously been recorded in the wet season. **Lyre-tailed Honeyguide** *Melichneutes robustus* was heard on 25 and 27 July 2014, whilst **Cassin's Honeybird** *Prodotiscus insignis* was noted on 29 July and 11 September 2013 (RM). **Forest Swallow** *Petrochelidon fuliginosa* was first recorded on 8 November 2013 (PH, APL, RM) and up to three were subsequently observed regularly, with a group of 20 on 14 January; the species was probably previously overlooked. **Black Saw-wing** *Psaldoprocne pristoptera* was an unexpected dry-season visitor, frequenting the ecotone between forest and farmland, with five present from 8 October 2013 until mid January and ten on 20 October. **Rufous Flycatcher Thrush** *Stizorhina fraseri* was recorded in October 2013–January 2014, whilst **Kemp's Longbill** *Macrosphenus kempfi* and **Yellow Longbill** *M. flavicans* were found to be scarce residents. Presumably the same **Rufous-vented Paradise Flycatcher** *Terpsiphone rufocinerea* was seen several times in the dry season, between 24 November 2013 and 20 January 2014. A pair of **Tiny Sunbirds** *Cinnyris minullus* was

observed regularly, whilst **Johanna's Sunbird** *C. johannae* was also present. A **Eurasian Golden Oriole** *Oriolus oriolus* was singing on 16 January 2014.

**Sjöstedt's Honeyguide Greenbul** *Baeopogon clamans*, **Eastern Bearded Greenbul** *Criniger chloronotus*, **Lesser Bristlebill** *Bleda notatus*, **Xavier's Greenbul** *Phyllastrephus xavieri*, **Yellow-footed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sethsmithi* and **Rachel's Malimbe** *Malimbus racheliae* were common, whilst **Long-tailed Hawk** *Urotriorchis macrourus*, **Cassin's Hawk Eagle** *Aquila africana*, **Yellow-casqued Hornbill** *Ceratogymna elata* (one of eight hornbill species present) and **Woodhouse's Antpecker** *Parmoptila woodhousei* were frequent (RM). The records above were made within a 400-ha core area protected by CERCOPAN, a conservation charity, in community forest. The area provides excellent birding opportunities with numerous trails and a research grid transect system. Rhoko Camp, located at the heart of the core area, offers comfortable tourist accommodation and is easily accessed by motorbike taxi from Iko Esai village. Birders are very welcome: contact info@cercopan.org or see www.cercopan.org for details (per PH).

## Rwanda

The most noteworthy records from the period September–December 2014 include the following. A **Lesser Flamingo** *Phoeniconaias minor* was photographed at Hippo Beach, Lake Mihindi, Akagera National Park (=NP), on 11 September; according to Vande Weghe & Vande Weghe (2011. *Birds in Rwanda: An Atlas and Handbook*) this is the first confirmed record since 1987. **White-backed Duck** *Thalassornis leucotis* and **Lesser Jacana** *Microparra capensis*, both reported as very rare and probably locally extinct due to habitat loss (Vande Weghe & Vande Weghe 2011) were observed in good numbers by the Rwanda Birding Club; the former was present at a dam near Nyamata in Bugesera District and the latter at two locations in Bugesera District and at



**Figure 31.** Lesser Jacana / Jacana nain *Microparra capensis*, Lake Cyahoha, Rwanda, 23 September 2014 (James Hogg)



**Figure 32.** Female Striped Crake / Marouette rayée *Amauornis marginalis*, Akagera National Park, Rwanda, 13 December 2014 (James Hogg)



**Figure 33.** Immature Black-winged Pratincole / Glaréole à ailes noires *Glareola nordmanni*, Lake Garharwa, Bugesera District, Rwanda, 15 October 2014 (James Hogg)

Rugezi Swamp (Fig. 31). An injured female **Striped Crake** *Amauornis* (= *Aenigmatolimnas*) *marginalis* was found in Akagera NP on 13 December (Fig. 32); there are fewer than ten records in Rwanda. An immature **Black-winged Pratincole** *Glareola nordmanni* was observed at Lake Garharwa, Bugesera District, on 15 October (Fig. 33); although field guides state that the species is frequent in Rwanda, Vande Weghe & Vande Weghe (2011) mention no records since 1984. A subadult male **Red-footed Falcon** *Falco vespertinus* was seen in Akagera NP on 19 October; this species is very irregularly recorded in the country (JH).

## Seychelles

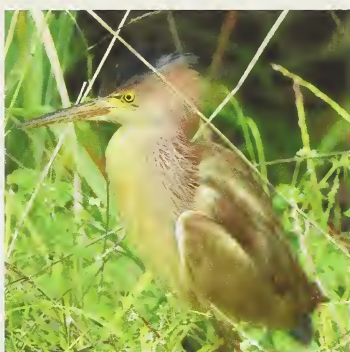
Reports received by Seychelles Bird Records Committee (SBRC) from the period June–December 2014 include the following. Two pelagic trips to the Seychelles Bank east of the granitic islands produced two **Bulwer's Petrels** *Bulweria bulwerii* on 23 June (one previous record), one **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** *Fregetta tropica* on 28 July (one record), one **White-faced Storm-petrel** *Pelagodroma marina* on 26 July, with another the next day (three records), at least 100 **Flesh-footed Shearwaters** *Puffinus carneipes* on 4–26 July (five records) and one **Jouanin's Petrel** *Bulweria fallax* on 3 July (12 records). Two days of chumming for tubenoses off Denis Island on 26–27 November produced 14 **Matsudaira's Storm-petrels** *Hydrobates matsudairae* (one previous record) and 25 **Wilson's Storm-petrels** *Oceanites oceanicus* (six records) at four separate sites, a **Black-bellied Storm-petrel** and a **Flesh-footed Shearwater**.

An **African Palm Swift** *Cypsiurus parvus* on Aldabra on 2 June was the third record for Seychelles, a **Corn Crake** *Crex crex* on North Island on 23 October the fourth (Fig. 34), and a male and female **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* on Desroches on 13 November the fifth. A **Yellow Bittern** *Ixobrychus sinensis* on Desroches on 31 October–1 November (Fig. 35) was the first





**Figure 34.** Corn Crane / Râle des genêts *Crex crex*, North Island, Seychelles, 23 October 2014 (C. J. Havemann)



**Figure 35.** Yellow Bittern / Blongios de Chine *Ixobrychus sinensis*, Desroches, Seychelles, 31 October 2014 (Pep Nogués)

west of the granitic islands, where it is resident.

Other records of interest include a **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur* on Aride on 2–4 November (nine previous records), a **Pacific Swift** *Apus pacificus* on Denis on 15 June (12 records) and at least two **Mascarene Martins** *Phedina borbonica* on Farquhar on 5–14 October (12 records),

Also noteworthy were at least two **Eleonora's Falcons** *Falco eleonorae* on Aldabra on 29 October–6 November and another two on 7–9 December (Fig. 36); a third-year **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus heuglini* on Desroches on 1–16 December (Fig. 37) and an adult on Alphonse on 16 December; a **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* on Silhouette on 13–18 November,



**Figure 36.** Eleonora's Falcon / Faucon d'Eléonore *Falco eleonorae*, Picard, Aldabra, Seychelles, 30 October 2014 (Catherina Onezia)



**Figure 37.** Third-year Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus fuscus heuglini*, Desroches, Seychelles, 1 December 2014 (Pep Nogués)

Goéland brun *Larus fuscus heuglini* de troisième année, Desroches, Seychelles, 1 décembre 2014 (Pep Nogués)

with another on Aldabra on 19 November; two **Common Swifts** *Apus apus* on Aldabra on 6–17 October; single **European Rollers** *Coracias garrulus* on Praslin on 15 October–16 November, Denis on 17–24 November and Alphonse on 2 December; a **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* on Alphonse on 6 October; a **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *Merops persicus* on Cousin on 16–17 November; a **Common Sand Martin** *Riparia riparia* on Desroches on 4–6 June, with four on the same island on 24 November; up to five **Common House Martins** *Delichon urbicum* on Aldabra on 23–26 October; a **Red-throated Pipit** *Anthus cervinus* on Denis on 19–26 May, with another on Alphonse on 26 November; a **Spotted Flycatcher** *Muscicapa striata* on Aldabra 13 November; and two

**Eurasian Golden Orioles** *Oriolus oriolus* on Denis on 26 May and up to four on Aldabra on 2 December (per AS).

## South Africa

The following records are from the period July–December 2014. Noteworthy species seen in the waters up to 200 nautical miles south and west of Cape Point include **Wandering Albatrosses** *Diomedea exulans* (ten in August; at least three in September; 38 in October); **Tristan Albatross** *D. (e.) dabbenena* (a ringed individual in early October); **Southern Royal Albatross** *D. epomophora* (at least two in September; six in October); **Northern Royal Albatrosses** *D. (e.) sanfordi* (at least five in August; three in September; 11 in October); **Salvin's Albatross** *Thalassarche (cauta) salvini* (a possible juvenile on 7 September); **Southern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes giganteus* (a white morph on 9 August); **Spectacled Petrel** *Procellaria conspicillata* (three in August; one in November; two in December); **Leach's Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates leucorhous* (= *Oceanodroma leucorhoa*; one on 7 December); and **Flesh-footed Shearwater** *Ardeanna* (= *Puffinus*) *carneipes* (one in September; one in October).

During a pelagic trip out of Kenton-on-Sea, Eastern Cape, on 22 December, a **Flesh-footed Shearwater** and a **Sabine's Gull** *Xema sabini* were observed. Pelagics out of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal, produced several **Antarctic Prions** *Pachyptila desolata* and at least two **Soft-plumaged Petrels** *Pterodroma mollis* on 10 August; a **Barau's Petrel** *P. baraui* and several **Sooty Terns** *Onychoprion fuscatus* on 25 October; and a **Tropical Shearwater** *Puffinus bailloni*, a **Grey Petrel** *Procellaria cinerea*, a **Northern Giant Petrel** *Macronectes halli* and a **European Storm-petrel** *Hydrobates pelagicus* on 22 November.

Two **Red-tailed Tropicbirds** *Phaethon rubricauda* flew over Kleinbrak, Western Cape, on 4 October. Three **Australian Gannets** *Morus serrator*, among them a new, unringed individual, were present

on Bird Island in Algoa Bay, Eastern Cape, on 13 November. A **Red-footed Booby** *Sula sula* was on Bird Island in Lambert's Bay, Western Cape, on 10–12 December; this species is very rare off South Africa's west coast. Another individual, found in a garden at Uvongo, KwaZulu-Natal, on 31 December, appeared to have an infection in its wing joint and was taken into care. A major influx of **Cape Cormorants** *Phalacrocorax capensis* into Durban Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, took place, with up to 70 counted on 11 August, the highest number in 15 years of monthly counts. A **Pink-backed Pelican** *Pelecanus rufescens* was seen in Camdeboo National Park (=NP), Eastern Cape, on 19 December.

**Single Rufous-bellied Herons** *Ardeola rufiventris* were reported from KwaZulu-Natal (at Tembe Elephant Park on 1–2 September and Phinda Private Game Reserve on 12 October), Mpumalanga (at Eden Nature Reserve, near Nelspruit, in October and Londolozi Game Reserve on 14 November), and Limpopo (near Polokwane on 27 December). A **Black Heron** *Egretta ardesiaca* was near Redhouse, Eastern Cape, on 29–30 November. In Gauteng, a **Slaty Egret** *E. vinaceigula* remained near Muldersdrift on 11–30 December, whilst another flew over Diepsloot Sewerage Works on 14 December. In Western Cape, **Goliath Herons** *Ardea goliath* were observed at Verlorenvlei, Eland's Bay, on 6–10 August (three); Sanbona Wildlife Reserve in mid October (from April 2014); the Berg River, east of Velddrif, on 1 November; and near Arniston on 9 November. An immature **Yellow-billed Stork** *Mycteria ibis* flew over Macassar, Western Cape, on 10 December. In September–December, reports involving at least 60 **European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were received from Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, North West Province, Free State, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. A **Palm-nut Vulture** *Gypohierax angolensis* was reported from the vulture restaurant near Polokwane, Limpopo, on 26

November—an unusual record for this area. A juvenile **Egyptian Vulture** *Neophron percnopterus*, first seen in Northern Tuli Game Reserve in Botswana on 26 November, eventually crossed the South African border; another immature was located at Klaserie, Limpopo, on 30 November. A **Lappet-faced Vulture** *Torgos tracheliotos* was observed at Hekpoort, Gauteng, on 2 August; yet another (or the same?) was at De Tweedespruit, north of Cullinan, on 7 August. A well out-of-range subadult **Brown Snake Eagle** *Circus cinereus* was seen near Caledon, Western Cape, on 13 December. Up to two **Western Marsh Harriers** *Circus aeruginosus* were at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 8 November–30 December. In Western Cape, a **Pallid Harrier** *C. macrourus* was seen in Plettenberg Bay Nature Reserve, on 28 December; this species is very rarely recorded in the province. A **Shikra** *Accipiter badius* was located at Kwandwe Private Game Reserve, near Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, on 6 August; this is well outside the species' usual range and is apparently a new record for the province. A **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk** *A. rufiventris* was located near Hekpoort, Gauteng, on 10 August—the first record from the west of the province. **Single Lesser Spotted Eagles** *Clanga pomarina* were observed at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 26 October, and south of Hluhluwe, KwaZulu-Natal, and near Sasolburg, Free State, on 25 November. In Western Cape, **Long-crested Eagles** *Lophaetus occipitalis* were reported from George on 11 August; Covie on 27 September; near Wellington on 1 November; near Porterville on 3 November; near Nature's Valley on 25 November; and Hoekwil, near Wilderness, on 11 December—the species is becoming more regular along the Garden Route. In December, single **Amur Falcons** *Falco amurensis* were seen north of Wittekrans, Western Cape; north-west of Olifantshoek, Northern Cape (where there was also a **Eurasian Hobby** *F. subbuteo*); and in Karoo NP, Western Cape.

A **Common Buttonquail** *Turnix sylvaticus* in Tanqua Karoo NP, Northern Cape, on 12 September was far from its known range. Also out of range were male and female **Black-rumped Buttonquails** *T. hottentottus* near Verena, in western Mpumalanga, on 15–17 November; one was observed again on 16 December. In the Free State, at least one **Red-chested Flufftail** *Sarothrura rufa* was seen at Echopark, between Sasolburg and Vaalpark, in mid October; there are very few records for the province. The long-staying **Wattled Crane** *Grus carunculata* with a flock of Blue Cranes *G. paradisaea* near Devon, Gauteng, was still present until at least 10 August. A **Grey Crowned Crane** *Balearica regulorum* flew east over Gauteng on 14 September, also in the company of Blue Cranes.

A **Crab-plover** *Dromas ardeola* was at Kosi Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, in late October. A **Temminck's Courser** *Cursorius temminckii* near Memel, Free State, on 5 October was an unusual record for this area. No fewer than 12 **Caspian Plovers** *Charadrius asiaticus* were counted at Mpempe Pan, KwaZulu-Natal, on 25 November; six were still there on 6 December, with another six on the Nibela Peninsula. In Western Cape, a **Lesser Sand Plover** *C. mongolus* was located in West Coast NP on 8 October, and a **Greater Sand Plover** *C. leschenaultii* at De Mond Nature Reserve on 9 November, with an **American Golden Plover** *Pluvialis dominica* also there on 21 October–9 November. A **Pacific Golden Plover** *P. fulva* was in Borakalalo Game Reserve, North West Province, on 19–29 October. **Pectoral Sandpipers** *Calidris melanotos* were recorded at Marievale Bird Sanctuary, Gauteng, on 26–28 October; St. Lucia, KwaZulu-Natal, on 26 October; and Marakele NP, Limpopo, during the last week of December (two). In Western Cape, up to two **Common Redshanks** *Tringa totanus* remained in West Coast NP from late August until the end of December; two were also seen at Strandfontein Sewage Works on 31 August. In September–December,



at least 15 **Green Sandpipers** *T. ochropus* were reported from Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. A **Ruddy Turnstone** *Arenaria interpres* was in Borakalalo Game Reserve, North West Province, on 24 October. A **Red-necked Phalarope** *Phalaropus lobatus* stayed at Velddrif, Western Cape, on 1 November–31 December, with another near Dwarskroosbos in early November and a third at Tankatara Salt Pans in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, until at least 15–22 November. A **Red Phalarope** *P. fulicarius* was found between Alberton and Nigel, Gauteng, on 29 November.

An **Arctic Skua** *Stercorarius parasiticus* at Borakalalo Game Reserve, North West Province, on 30 November was a very unusual inland record. Up to two **Franklin's Gulls** *Leucophaeus pipixcan* remained at Strandfontein Sewage Works, Western Cape, until at least 27 October. A **Lesser Black-backed Gull** *Larus fuscus* was in Durban Bay, KwaZulu-Natal, on 11–12 August. The **Bridled Tern** *Onychoprion anaethetus* that returned to the roost at Cape Recife in Port Elizabeth, Eastern Cape, for its 13th season on 28 April, was still visiting the area in August; this bird is one of the longest-staying rarities ever recorded in southern Africa. Up to two **Sooty Terns** were still present at the St. Lucia estuary, KwaZulu-Natal, until at least mid November; two were also reported from Cape Recife, Eastern Cape, on 3 September. A freshly dead **Arctic Tern** *Sterna paradisaea* found at Mooi River, KwaZulu-Natal, c.110 km inland, in August was ringed on 20 June 2011 on Wooden Ball Island, Maine, USA, when one year old; in southern Africa, this is an almost exclusively pelagic species recorded during the austral summer and it is very unusual that a bird in its fifth year should still be in the subregion during the austral winter. A **Black Tern** *Chlidonias niger* at Tankatara Salt Pans in Port Elizabeth on 22–26 November is the first record in Eastern Cape for many years. Two **African Skimmers** *Rynchops flavirostris* were seen along

the Limpopo River in Kruger NP in early September; this species is now very localised and regarded as Endangered in the subregion.

A **European Turtle Dove** *Streptopelia turtur*, a very rare vagrant in southern Africa, was at Phinda Private Nature Reserve, KwaZulu-Natal, on 14–15 December. The first photographic evidence for the existence of a dark morph of **Burchell's Coucal** *Centropus burchellii* was obtained at Port Alfred, Eastern Cape, on 28–29 October. The following were reported far from their normal range: a **Levaillant's Cuckoo** *Clamator levaillantii* at Zululand Rhino Reserve near Mkuze, KwaZulu-Natal, on 30 November; a **Common Cuckoo** *Cuculus canorus* at Harkerville, Western Cape, on 16 November; and a **Klaas's Cuckoo** *Chrysococcyx klaas* north-west of Olifantshoek, Northern Cape, in late December. A **Marsh Owl** *Asio capensis* north of Twee Rivieren in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park, Northern Cape, in early October, was a remarkable find. A **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina* at Tinmyne, just north-west of Mokopane, Limpopo, on 20–21 September was well west of its normal range. At Rondevlei Nature Reserve, Western Cape, a **Brown-hooded Kingfisher** *Halcyon albiventris* was reported on 21 September—an extremely unusual species for the Cape Peninsula. An **African Pygmy Kingfisher** *Ispidina picta* was found north of Middelburg, Eastern Cape, on 26 October. Several **White-fronted Bee-eaters** *Merops bullockoides* were still present near Calitzdorp, Western Cape, on 31 August. An immature **Blue-cheeked Bee-eater** *M. persicus* was in George, Western Cape, on 1 November; the last known record in the province was in December 2011. In Eastern Cape, two were observed between Marsh Strand and Haga Haga in mid November. A **Broad-billed Roller** *Eurystomus glaucurus* around Emmentia Dam in Johannesburg, Gauteng, on 21–28 November is the third record for the province in the last five years. In KwaZulu-Natal, one was seen at Amatikulu Nature

Reserve, north of Durban, on 22 December. In Eastern Cape, out-of-range **Common Scimitarbills** *Rhinopomastus cyanomelas* were noted upstream of Jansenville on 21 September (one) and north-west of Bedford on 19 October (two). In Gauteng, the xanthochroic (where red is replaced by yellow) **Black-collared Barbet** *Lybius torquatus* found in Helderkruijn, Roodepoort, in 2013, was back in the same area in early September; another xanthochroic individual, paired with a normal-coloured bird, was found in Krugersdorp. **Black-collared Barbets** seem to be moving into Western Cape, with another record of two birds near Nature's Valley on 29 October.

The **African Pied Wagtail** *Motacilla aguimp* in Jonkershoek, Western Cape, which first arrived at this site in December 2011, was still present on 31 October, whilst the **Mountain Wagtail** *M. clara* at Groenkloof Nature Reserve, Pretoria, Gauteng, remained throughout the period. A **Grey Wagtail** *M. cinerea* was found in the St. Lucia area, KwaZulu-Natal, on 20 October. Yet another **White-browed Scrub Robin** *Cercotrichas leucophrys* was mist-netted near Nature's Valley in late August, probably the fifth or sixth to have been caught in this area. A **Bush Blackcap** *Lioptilus nigricapillus* visited a garden in Melville, Gauteng, from late August until at least 12 September. A **Knysna Warbler** *Bradypterus sylvaticus* in Doreen Clark Nature Reserve, Hilton, KwaZulu-Natal, on 13–25 November, was possibly the northernmost record. A **Garden Warbler** *Sylvia borin* was seen in Graaff-Reinet, Eastern Cape on 12–27 November and a **Common Whitethroat** *S. communis* near Tongaat, KwaZulu-Natal, on 24 December. Single **Olive-tree Warblers** *Hippolais olivetorum* were found in Northern Cape in late December: one north-west of Olifantshoek, with another near Hartswater. **Wailing Cisticola** *Cisticola lais* and **Wing-snapping Cisticola** *C. ayresii* c.5 km north of Wittedrif, Western Cape, on 15 December and **Grey Tit Flycatchers**

*Myioparus plumbeus* at Augrabies Falls NP, Northern Cape, on 9 November, are unusually westerly records.

**Lesser Grey Shrikes** *Lanius minor* were reported west of Bredasdorp, Western Cape, on 28 October and west of Aberdeen, Eastern Cape, on 7 December. A **Southern White-crowned Shrike** *Eurocephalus anguitimens* at Standerton, Mpumalanga, in early September may be one of the southernmost records. An out-of-range **Retz's Helmetshrike** *Prionops retzii* was observed in the Magaliesburg area, Gauteng, on 18–19 October. A pair of **Red-headed Weavers** *Anaplectes melanotis* returned for the fourth year to build a nest at Leopard Mountain Game Lodge, Mkhuze, KwaZulu-Natal, in November. A flock of **Red-billed Queleas** *Quelea quelea* was between Witsand and Swellendam, Western Cape, on 14 September; this species has expanded its range in recent years and is being increasingly reported from the province. In Limpopo, a group of at least five **Red-headed Finches** *Amadina erythrocephala* was located south of Shingwedzi in Kruger NP on 8 December, continuing the species' recent eastward expansion. A pair of **Grey Waxbills** *Estrilda perreini* at Longmere Dam, north of White River, on 5 December, is a very unusual species for Mpumalanga and far from previous records (per TH & AR).

## Sudan

Records from September–December 2014 include the following. At Khartoum Sewage Pools, just south of Khartoum, eight **Purple Swamphens** *Porphyrio porphyrio*, including a juvenile, were observed on 12 September; the species has been observed year-round in recent years, but the sighting of a juvenile is the first proof of breeding. Also there were 48 **Hottentot Teals** *Anas hottentota*—the highest count to date. Large numbers of **Common Moorhens** *Gallinula chloropus* (an uncommon to rare species, according to Nikolaus 1987. *Distribution Atlas of Sudan's Birds*), including juveniles

and some very small chicks, were also present, as well as 28 of the usual **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristata*. A **Ferruginous Duck** *Aythya nyroca* at Bahri Sewage Pools, just north of Khartoum, on 19 September, was the first for this site. Four **Southern Pochards** *Netta erythrophthalma* were also there, on 12 December (TJ, MT). The most noteworthy waders at this locality included **White-tailed Lapwings** *Vanellus leucurus*, observed on 17 October (at least two) and 12 December (four). **Barred Warblers** *Sylvia nisoria* were mist-netted near Sennar in early October and late November; both were juveniles (TJ).

## Uganda

Records for the period August–December 2014 include the following. An **Akun Eagle Owl** *Bubo leucostictus* discovered in Semliki National Park (=NP) on 27 September (Fig. 38) is the first for the country and East Africa (TN per RS). A pair of **Great Crested Grebes** *Podiceps cristatus* with two young was on Lake Saka, Fort Portal, on 26–28 September, with a single on nearby Lake Kyaninga on 12 October, and at least 18, including displaying pairs and a pair with two small young, on Kigere Crater Lake, near Lake Saka, on 19 October. A waterfowl count at Kibimba Rice Scheme on 12 August



**Figure 38.** Akun Eagle Owl / Grandduc tacheté *Bubo leucostictus*, Semliki National Park, Uganda, 27 September 2014 (Timme Nyegaard)

revealed an exceptional total of 1,046 **Glossy Ibises** *Plegadis falcinellus*. An immature **Hartlaub's Duck** *Peronetta hartlaubii* observed from the Kirumia trail in Semliki NP on 18 December, appears to be only the third country record. At least four pairs of **Red-knobbed Coots** *Fulica cristatus* were on small crater lakes near Lake Saka on 19 October.

## European Honey Buzzards

*Pernis apivorus* were reported from Lake Saka on 28 September (three) and 5 October (four with 45 Steppe Buzzards *Buteo buteo vulpinus* and nine Lesser Spotted Eagles *Clanga pomarina*). **Bat Hawks** *Macheirhamphus alcinus* were observed at Tooro Botanical Gardens, Fort Portal, on 26 September (one) and Lutembe Lagoon on 19 October (a pair at dusk with three African Hobbies *Falco cuvieri*). An adult male **Red-footed Falcon** *F. vespertinus* flew over Lake Saka on 5 October. A **Verreaux's Eagle Owl** *Bubo lacteus* remained at Tooro Botanical Gardens, Fort Portal, from 4 November until the end of December.

## Two White-throated Blue

**Swallows** *Hirundo nigrita* were seen on the Semliki River on 11 December; this appears to be only the third record for the country. Two **Simple Greenbuls** *Chlorocichla simplex* showed well at a roadside adjacent to Semliki NP on 10 December; there are few Ugandan records. Small numbers of the distinctive race *melanops* of **Banded Prinia** *Prinia bairdii* were recorded in remnant forest near Fort Portal on 24 October and 14 December. Four **Red-winged Grey Warblers** *Drymocichla incana* near Hoima on 30 October is a southerly extension of the species' known range. A **Yellow-footed Flycatcher** *Muscicapa sethsmithi* was seen in Semliki NP on 18 December; most records are from Budongo. A **Semi-collared Flycatcher** *Ficedula semitorquata* was observed at Tooro Botanical Gardens on 4–5 November, with another there on 15 December. A male **Blue-throated Brown Sunbird** *Cyanomitra cyanaolaema* visiting gardens on the edge of Lutembe





**Figure 39.** Northern Masked Weaver / Tisserin du Nil *Ploceus taeniopterus*, near Fort Portal, Uganda, 10 October 2014 (Roger Skeen)

Lagoon, in early October, was far from its preferred forest habitat. An adult male **Emin's Shrike** *Lanius gubernator* was at Awalukok, north of Lira, on 8 August; according to Carswell *et al.* (2005). *The Bird Atlas of Uganda*) there are few records, mainly in the far north. A pair of **Northern Masked Weavers** *Ploceus taeniopterus*, found breeding in a swamp just north of Fort Portal on 4–10 October (Fig. 39), was still present on 29 November, but had departed by 15 December; the outcome of the breeding attempt is unknown. Three **Orange-cheeked Waxbills** *Estrilda melpoda* were in herbage adjacent to Semliki NP on 10 December, with seven there on 19 December; there are few Ugandan records (RS).

## Zimbabwe

Southern Africa's first **Grasshopper Buzzard** *Butastur rufipennis* was photographed at Ngamo Pans, in Hwange National Park (=NP) on 7 December; this intra-African migrant usually moves no further south than Tanzania (per AR). Also of great interest for the subregion was a male **Blackcap** *Sylvia atricapilla* observed at Seldomseen, in the Vumba area, on 8 December (per TH).

Other noteworthy records from the period July–December 2014 include the following. At least three

**European Honey Buzzards** *Pernis apivorus* were reported near Victoria Falls on 18–19 November (per TH). Rare ducks, all reported in July, included 21 **Cape Teals** *Anas capensis* and five **Cape Shovelers** *Spatula smithii* in Bulawayo (JdP) and two **Maccoa Ducks** *Oxyura maccoa* in Hwange NP (TT). A **Great White Pelican** *Pelecanus onocrotalus* was observed in Mana Pools NP on 20 October (DR-G). An **Abdim's Stork** *Ciconia abdimii* arrived in a garden in Chadcombe, Harare, on 5 November; this individual has returned to this site annually for the last 35 years (KA). A flock of six **Greater Flamingos** *Phoenicopterus roseus* flew along the Zambezi River at New Ngundu, Mana Pools NP, on 2 September (SM & MdP). Five **Wattled Cranes** *Grus carunculatus* were at Driefontein Mission Dam, Gutu District, on 23 August and c.100 **Lesser Jacanas** *Microparra capensis* at Nyamungayi Pan, Seke District, on 25 July (IM). Five **Senegal Lapwings** *Vanellus lugubris* were reported from the Save–Runde Junction on 11 July (LB & CB) and two **Green Sandpipers** *Tringa ochropus* from near Masoka Camp on 6 December (per TH).

A remarkably large flock of c.50 **Böhm's Spinetails** *Neafriapus boehmii* was seen in Mana Pools NP on 3 October (DR-G). A male **Narina's Trogon** *Apaloderma narina*, located below Maleme Dam in Matopos NP in mid August, was well out of its normal range (per TH). An **African Pitta** *Pitta angolensis* appeared at Wavell Road, Highlands, Harare, on 25 November; this species is only occasionally noted in the city on its southbound migration (RBU). Four **African Firefinches** *Lagonosticta rubricata* were at the Great Zimbabwe Ruins, Masvingo, on 12 October, outside their known range according to current distribution maps (per TH).

*Records were collated by Ron Demey from contributions supplied by Ken Ambler (KA), Vaughan Ashby / Birdfinders (VA), Rubén Barone (RB), Lin Barrie (LB), Cameron Blair (CB), Mark van Boekel (MvB), Chris*

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# Reviews



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## HBW and BirdLife International Illustrated Checklist of the Birds of the World. Vol. 1: Non-Passerines

Josep del Hoyo and Nigel J. Collar, 2014. Lynx Edicions, Barcelona. 904 pp, 357 colour plates and 4,428 distribution maps. Hardback. ISBN 978-84-96553-94-1. €185.

This publication is the fourth, major 'world bird checklist' for the non-passerines published in the last few years. Three of them already include the passerines—Gill & Donsker (2014), Clements *et al.* (2014) both of which are regularly updated online, and Dickinson & Christidis (2014), while the publishers of this new HBW / BirdLife checklist state that its passerine volume will be published in early 2016.

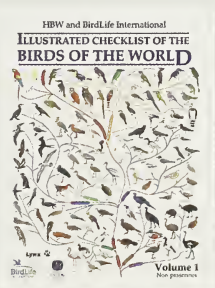
The first questions therefore must be 'Do we need another checklist?' and 'How do they compare?' The HBW / BirdLife book is certainly

very different, most obviously in that it is considerably larger and that is largely because it contains so much more. The others are all essentially just lists of species and subspecies, albeit with notes and sources noted. This one includes a full list (obviously!), but there are also illustrations and small distribution maps for all species, as well as rather more details of the reasons for their taxonomic decisions.

Previous checklists have usually been based on the Biological Species Concept (BSC) or Phylogenetic Species Concept (PSC). This one is different, albeit stated to be rooted in BSC. In 2010, a paper was published in *Ibis* (Tobias *et al.* 2010) describing a method of objectively determining the 'distance' between forms. This is based on a scoring system using plumage characters, measurements, ecology, vocalisations and geographical distribution; then, if a pair of forms differs by a score of seven or more they are deemed to be different species. Slightly controversially, the system does not include genetic distances, in part because all groups have yet to be so investigated. The scoring system has been used throughout this new list for species determination and for the considerable majority of taxa it merely restates traditional divisions. However, the delimiting and determination of races has not

been subjected to quite the same objectivity and rigour, retaining a fair amount of subjectivity, although here too the majority of decisions do follow tradition. A full explanation of the entire system is included in the lengthy introductory chapter, which should be deemed compulsory reading for all taxonomists, although they will not necessarily agree with it.

So how does the taxonomy actually compare to other lists? For the purposes of this review, I have only considered species that occur in the area covered by ABC. Overall, the book considers there to be 1,189 extant species in the ABC region. This compares with 1,183 in the IOC list (version 4.3 published July 2014), 1,154 in the Clements list (version 6.9 published August 2014) and 1,134 in the latest 'Howard & Moore' list (Dickinson & Remsen 2013). But, although the total number here is very similar to the IOC list, those forms considered to be species are by no means the same—and if you sum all taxa treated as species by at least one of the four checklists, the total would be 1,210! To take this a little further, this new list has lumped 27 forms considered by IOC to be species into others, the majority also lumped by one or both of the other two. But, it also splits 33 new species and it seems that barbets are especially favoured with ten extra species. There are also a few





different decisions as to which groups should be treated at family level. For example, the HBW / BirdLife list retains the flufftails *Sarothrua* spp. within the rails (Rallidae), but splits some of the storm petrels (Hydrobatidae) into a new family Oceanitidae, both contrary to the IOC list yet coincident with the Howard & Moore list.

The considerable majority of genera and families here agree with other lists, although there are some new ones. For example, several of the 'teal' and 'shoveler' ducks are now placed within *Spatula* not *Anas*, and several *Lybius* barbets are now in *Pogonornis*, but it should be noted that Howard and Moore often uses these 'new' names too. Needless to say, the detail of the order of species in families and of families overall is initially idiosyncratic, and it is certainly different in several respects from all other lists. The index is therefore essential, especially to find the smaller families and monotypic genera within large families, and sometimes readers will need to search for the specific name, rather than that of the genus, as the latter has changed from the former status quo.

Does this splitting of species and redefining what constitutes a species matter? In many ways no, although for those interested in their life lists, it necessitates stating which taxonomy you are following. However, in conservation terms, these days it probably does matter rather more. In some parts of the world a 'species' is enshrined in law as an entity to be conserved, whereas subspecies do not possess anything like as much 'clout'. For non-scientists too, a species represents a more easily understandable entity, and such people certainly do not work with the uncertainties, arguments and differences that are the professional playground of taxonomists. Whether this was a reason for BirdLife International to collaborate with and endorse this new list that recognises more species is unknown, but previous versions of BirdLife's checklist were rather more conservative than most others.

The book itself is impressive and large. The introduction is comprehensive and fully explains the rationale behind the methods and explains the symbols used. Then there is the list itself, with text and plates facing each other, and the maps placed next to the relevant illustrations. Most of the images are taken from the earlier volumes of *Handbook of the Birds of the World*, although there are many revised and new depictions, the latter mainly to accommodate the new species, but all have been completely rearranged onto new plates to take account of the revised order. The maps too have been updated from the originals as necessary, but are otherwise similar to those in the earlier volumes. The texts are headed by the accepted scientific and English names, while French, German, Spanish and sometimes alternative English names are also included. The main paragraph essentially reproduces the taxonomic section of the species accounts from previous volumes of *HBW*, although there is usually rather more explanation and documentation of the decisions adopted. The list of accepted subspecies with bibliographic references and brief notes of range follow, again very much on the lines of the original *HBW*, although completely updated and revised. The book is completed by two appendices of extinct forms (one with illustrations and one without), an appendix of reference maps noting place names to province level, a comprehensive bibliography (with full references) and a full index. All these make for a highly appealing book.

Would I buy it? There is no question that it is the most attractive of the four main world checklists, but it is also the most expensive (retailing at a similar price to the two volumes of Howard & Moore, whereas the IOC and Clements lists are free online). Take your choice and, if this book is it, await the passerines volume with interest.

Peter Lack

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## The Birds of Ghana: An Atlas and Handbook

Françoise Dowsett-Lemaire and Robert J. Dowsett, 2014. Tauraco Press, Liège. 720 pp, 21 colour photographic plates of habitats and birds, plus numerous black-and-white photographs, figures and distribution maps. Paperback. ISBN 2-87225-007-7. UK£34.99.

This awe-inspiring volume follows the style of the same authors' *The Birds of Malawi* and *The Birds of Zambia* (reviewed in *Bull. ABC* 14: 110–111 & 16: 112–113), and anyone familiar with these already classic works will immediately recognise the same high standard and layout.

L. G. Grimes published the first annotated checklist of the birds of Ghana in 1987 as part of the BOU checklist series. That work listed 721 species known from Ghana, which figure has now risen to some 750, reflecting the considerable advance in knowledge of the Ghanaian avifauna within a relatively short period. This is primarily due to the determined efforts of the present



authors. The slim, older work was a simple and somewhat briefly annotated list, which has obviously formed part of the basis for the present volume, but each species has been critically re-evaluated, and the current tome now presents so much more information by incorporating a detailed atlas. To create the maps, the country has been divided into a total of 93 30 × 30-minute squares, which between the years 2004 and 2011 the authors remarkably managed to personally survey in their entirety. Indeed, one figure in the book plots the authors' overnight campsites, at which even a casual glance immediately demonstrates the thoroughness of their travels! Added to the authors' own exhaustive field records are confirmed historical records, museum specimens and, in recent years, numerous field sightings contributed by a large number of credited field observers. Thus the clear and accurate distribution maps depict the current state of knowledge and form the ultimate benchmark against which anyone, whether casual birder or serious ornithologist, will be able to compare their own sightings.

It should be stressed that this is not only an atlas as it also describes itself as a 'handbook'. The 144 pages of introductory material includes a chapter describing the country's fascinating ornithological history, chronologically cataloguing the exploits of workers from Bosman, Isert and Pel to the recent work of the British Trust for Ornithology, as well as the amazing discoveries made by those whose work involves following satellite-tracked birds. There follow detailed essays on the vegetation and major bird habitats. The biogeography of the country

is examined based on the concepts and definitions of White (1983), and useful tables of species from the Guineo-Congolian and Sudanian regions are included. Finally, the composition of the avifauna and its conservation within Ghana is discussed. It is noteworthy that the authors have acquired breeding evidence for almost 100 additional species, versus those known by Grimes. The 'Conservation' chapter makes a good read and could easily act as a 'where to watch birds in Ghana' guide as it is packed with useful information.

The species accounts themselves occupy 500 pages. Unsurprisingly, given that Bob Dowsett was a major contributor to the work, taxonomy generally follows the fourth edition of *The Howard and Moore Complete Checklist of the Birds of the World* (Dickinson & Remsen 2013, Dickinson & Christidis 2014). However, reference is also made to the taxonomy that was followed by Grimes, which in turn was based on Morony *et al.* (1975) for its family sequence and White (1961–65) and Bannerman (1930–51) for the names. A large and clear distribution map is presented for each species, with the exception of vagrants and accidental visitors known from just one or two localities / records. The map template depicts country boundaries, principal rivers and the Volta River dam, with water shaded pale blue, whilst an area shaded pale grey elegantly represents the transition zone separating the rainforest in the south-west from the northern savannas. Within the 30 × 30-minute squares, the presence of each species is represented by a solid blue square. Other symbols, such as an open blue square, question mark or black square, are used to denote historical, questionable or migratory statuses, which are further discussed in the accompanying texts. Usually, there are just one or two species per page and the maps are accompanied by precise, succinct and well-referenced texts covering distribution not only in Ghana, but also elsewhere in Africa and the rest of the world. Further sections cover ecology

and habits, status, conservation and taxonomy. Where appropriate, IUCN status is also indicated.

Appendices analyse 2,541 ringing recoveries of 65 species and include plotted maps for 22 of them. Finally, there is a very thorough and invaluable gazetteer of all Ghanaian localities mentioned in the text, often based on the authors' own GPS readings, followed by an extensive 14 pages of references.

Available superlatives are probably insufficient for this superb and thoroughly essential, academic work. For anybody interested in Ghanaian birds and their distribution, it should be a compulsory purchase and would ideally be used in conjunction with a field guide that covers the topic of species identification, thereby affording the user the most complete overview of the country's avifauna that has ever existed.

Nik Borrow

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## Sappi Birds of South Africa

Saartjie Kidson and Herman van Niekerk, 2014. Briza Publications, Pretoria. 320 pp, 800 colour photographs and 720 maps. Flexibound with Callfinder. ISBN 978-1-920217-33-4. UK£79.99 (with Callfinder) or UK£19.99 (book only).

With the advent of digital technology a whole new realm of possibilities is evolving for field guides and how we use them. For the computer, tablet or smartphone there are currently 'ebooks' (straight copies of a book with or without sounds) and 'apps' (often complex and multi-layered aids to identification incorporating vocalisations) and now with this work we have the Callfinder! This standalone, rechargeable battery device is shaped like a giant index finger, which when pointed at an image in the accompanying traditional photographic field guide (branded 'Callfinder ready') scans an invisible grid underlying the photograph enabling it to play the relevant song or call of the species from its internal memory. Free updates are promised to be made available via the Briza website as new calls are added to the collection. The sound produced from the single-watt speaker is clear, sharp and immediate. By inserting a TF card, the device can also be used as an MP3 player, although there appears to be no way to choose which track is to be played unless it is connected to a computer. It also functions as a simple recorder able to accommodate short recordings with c.100 minutes' capacity, although you can only actually listen to the last recording made on the Callfinder itself. Any other recording requires a computer

to be heard, managed or deleted. The battery life is estimated to be c.2 years (guaranteed for one year). However, what happens when the battery finally dies is unclear, but one assumes that a new Callfinder will have to be purchased or the existing one sent back for battery replacement.

The book itself is available in both English and Afrikaans editions, and covers more than 720 species of the 850+ found in South Africa. Each is represented by at least one photograph (occasionally an illustration), usually of a male in breeding plumage, alongside a clear detailed map. Avoiding taxonomic order, it seeks to aid identification by considering both habitat and shape of birds. Each of the species is included within one of four colour-indexed sections: Water and Wetland Birds, Birds of Prey and Carrion Eaters, Veld Landscape Birds, and Bush and Tree Landscape Birds. Within these broad categories, the species are then grouped into those of similar appearance, which are keyed by the 'Shapefinder' at the front of the book. The text that accompanies each bird is concise and covers rather more detail than just the identification from field marks, whilst a series of complicated symbols aims to provide an understanding of size, habitat, nesting habits and social behaviour. The symbols are explained in full in the introduction and summarised at the end of the book for easier reference.

The layout is clear and pleasing, and by using the Callfinder while browsing it is very easy to quickly compare the sounds and simultaneously absorb a wealth of data for each species. There is a huge amount of abbreviated material here that has been arranged to provide as much immediately accessible information to the reader / viewer / listener as possible. At 175 × 245 mm, the book is rather too large to slip into the pocket and bears more resemblance to a condensed basic handbook than a field guide. Therefore, I feel that it has greater use as a primer at home before a trip,

to familiarise oneself with the birds, rather than as a tool to be used in the field. Used in this context, I can see this novel concept as an ideal guide to introduce the beginner to the wealth of South African birds and, in particular, to learn their vocalisations, for teachers in schools, or as a demonstration kit for tour guides.

*Nik Borrow*

## The Study and Ringing of Palearctic Birds at Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, 1969–2012: an overview and update

David Pearson, Graeme Backhurst and Colin Jackson, 2014. Scopus Special Supplement No. 4. East Africa Natural History Society, Nairobi, Kenya. 80 pp, colour photographs and maps. UK£8.50 (UK), UK£12.00 (rest of the world) from Graeme Backhurst, 2 Reed Cottages, Windmill Lane, Faversham, Kent ME13 7GT, UK. E-mail: [graeme.backhurst@gmail.com](mailto:graeme.backhurst@gmail.com)

It was way back in 1969 that it was first realised that large numbers of Palearctic passerines could be found at the lights of Ngulia Lodge, Tsavo West National Park, Kenya, during migration periods—primarily in November and December. The main concentrations were during low mist or rain at night under moonless conditions. This discovery led to the establishment of a ringing programme, which began in 1972 and continues until the present day, and this publication presents an overview of the main findings from the work.

Up to 2012 just short of half a million Palearctic birds had been ringed by the project, with three main species being involved: Marsh Warbler *Acrocephalus palustris* (42%), Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (21%) and Common Whitethroat *Sylvia communis* (20%). The remainder included several migrants little known west of the Kenyan highlands, but surprisingly few Afrotropical birds. The ringing team is renowned for its knowledge of different racial plumages and biometrics, and the records

reveal that most species are from populations breeding in Eastern Europe or Western / Central Asia.

This report analyses their arrival patterns and provides details of the 222 recoveries recorded to date. These comprised 122 to or from Palearctic breeding areas, 81 to or from Middle Eastern passage sites, 18 from southern African wintering areas, and one from a probable Ethiopian stopover area. Of special interest is the fact that only 63 birds have been re-trapped at the lodge in a subsequent season.

One can only admire the enthusiasm of those involved in keeping this project going given the relatively low recovery rates, but the task has grown with assistance being provided by both African and international ringers. In fact the ringing site has been operated on well over 1,100 nights, with mist occurring on more than 60% of these and rain on 26%.

Patterns of moult are summarised and details of mass are discussed. Some species are frequently 20–30% and sometimes 50% above lean weight, with the potential to complete long onward flights south of Ngulia. There is also discussion of the composition of catches over four decades, which show a recent increase in the percentage of Marsh Warblers and a decrease in Common Whitethroats. Others that are now less frequently caught are Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Rufous Scrub Robin *Erythropgyia*

*galactotes*, Upcher's Warbler *Hippolais languida* and Willow Warbler *Phylloscopus trochilus*.

The publication analyses the results from every angle—coverage, numbers ringed and recovered, origins and races of individual Palearctic species, diurnal changes in species pattern and seasonal timing of migration. Age proportions, patterns of wing moult, mass and fat loads are all summarised, together with apparent long-term trends.

The situation with the lights at Ngulia is, of course, completely artificial, and the authors consider the effects of such locations on migration strategy and stopover. They also consider the potential role of Ngulia in the future monitoring of Palearctic migrant bird populations.

The report contains many small photographs of the birds trapped and the location. A series of four maps indicates the recovery or ringing locations for the key species, although the idea of combining (in one case) up to six species on one map defeats the object.

Those interested in the Ngulia work may wish to watch a lecture by David Pearson at the 2014 ABC Annual Meeting in which he summarised the achievements to date: <http://youtu.be/3o5bN61VKLc>

Keith Betton



## Guide de Poche des Oiseaux de Pointe-Noire et du Kouilou, République du Congo

Christine Gonzalez-Dunia, Vincent Delhaye-Prat and Jérôme Mokoko Ikonga. 2014. Privately published. 184 pp, c.500 colour photographs and two maps. 10,000 FCFA (€15). Locally available at Pointe-Noire and Parc National Conkouati-Douli. For more information, contact the authors: [cj.gonzalez-dunia@laposte.net](mailto:cj.gonzalez-dunia@laposte.net), [vincent.delhaye-prat@total.com](mailto:vincent.delhaye-prat@total.com) or [jrmokoko@gmail.com](mailto:jrmokoko@gmail.com)

Made 'by amateurs for amateurs', this little guide includes 169 species observed at Pointe-Noire and the Kouilou, Congo-Brazzaville. All species are illustrated with three photographs of variable quality taken *in situ*. Some identification features are briefly highlighted. The text is in French, with English and local bird names provided. Profits from this booklet, which has been produced in the country and sponsored by Total E&P Congo, will go to organisations working locally for the conservation of biodiversity.

Ron Demey



### John Ash: 1925–2014

The name of Dr J. S. Ash is perhaps best known to ornithologists around the world as the author of c.350 scientific papers and articles, the architect of two big atlas projects, and the discoverer of several new bird species. His long and distinguished career spanned more than 60 years, and covered a wide range of interests. Much of his time was spent in Africa or was related to African birds, but his many achievements extended well beyond Africa, and his early career focused on gamebirds and pesticides in Britain.



John Ash, in Spain, 1957  
(Eric Hosking)

John Ash was born on 26 May 1925 in Gosforth, Northumberland, the eldest of four boys. His interest in birds developed at an early age and he was an avid finder of birds' nests, becoming a ringer in his early teens. After attending Pocklington School in Yorkshire, he took a degree in agricultural entomology at Durham (1942–45) followed by two years of national service with the Royal Air Force. Returning to his studies, he completed a Diploma at Imperial College (1948–51), where he met and married his wife Jonquil, followed by a Ph.D. on mallophaga and other avian ectoparasites (1951–54) while working for the newly established ICI Game Research Station at Fordingbridge. When the latter closed down in 1960, John helped to found the Game Research Association (GRA) in 1961, becoming first its chief scientist and later its director. During this time he was undertaking pioneering work on Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix* and the devastating effects of pesticides on wildlife and the countryside, publishing a number of important papers based on this research. This work helped earn him the British Trust for Ornithology's Tucker Medal in 1967.

John's interests were strongly based around field work, and in particular migration. He became a regular visitor to Portland Bill, on England's south coast, and helped establish the bird observatory there in 1960. His detailed observations were

matched by meticulous record-keeping and resulted in many publications, most notably a long series of notes in *British Birds* documenting a wide variety of unusual observations, including his discovery of Britain's first Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* in 1961. Increasingly, John made a number of foreign travels in pursuit of birds, and participated in British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) expeditions to Morocco (1963 and 1965) and Lake Chad (1967). These trips undoubtedly helped provide the impetus for a change of career in 1969.

When the GRA was merged with the Game Advisory Service to form the Game Conservancy Trust, John acquired the opportunity to take up a post with the US Naval Medical Research Unit to study the role of migratory birds in the transmission of ectoparasites and blood-borne pathogens. Based in Addis Ababa with his wife Jonquil and daughter Caroline, he spent the next eight years in Ethiopia. He travelled the country widely, ringing resident and migrant birds, and recording his observations systematically. He set up his long-running atlas project in 1969, dividing the country into 479 half-degree grid squares, with the aim of visiting as many as possible in order to plot the distribution of birds in Ethiopia (at that time also including Eritrea). He achieved a remarkable personal coverage of more than 70% of the possible squares, discovering several new species for Ethiopia and a new species to science, Ankober Serin *Serinus ankoberensis*.

His stay in Ethiopia came to an abrupt end in 1977 due to the worsening political situation, but after a year at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington he returned to Africa, this time to Somalia to manage the FAO Quelea Control Programme at the Ministry of Agriculture. Having met John Miskell at the Nairobi Museum while en route to Somalia, he offered JM a job with the project, and so began a long and fruitful collaboration, and friendship, which was to last

the rest of his life. Over the next four years they travelled widely together throughout Somalia, making three month-long trips to distant parts of the country and numerous short ones. Just as he had done in Ethiopia, Ash set up another atlas project based on half-degree squares, and commenced systematically collating bird records. By the time he left Somalia in 1983, John had plotted the distribution of 650 species in Somalia, adding no fewer than 50 species to the country's avifauna and once again discovering a new species, Ash's Lark *Mirafra ashi*, as well as several new subspecies.

John Miskell has kindly provided some fascinating and enlightening anecdotes of their exploits in Somalia, giving a flavour of the hardships and successes of these pioneering adventures in a land that is strictly off-limits now. There is not room to recount more than a few here:

"The first long trip we made was to the north-west, from 27 April to 25 May 1979. On all three of our long trips we nearly always camped out in tents, and avoided towns as much as possible. A rare exception to this was a night in relative comfort at the Desert Locust Control compound in Hargeisa. On the way to Hargeisa we stopped off at the small town of Tuka Raq to have tea. A local Somali man came into the small restaurant, saw us, then came over and began a conversation. It turned out that he had worked many years as a merchant seaman and had only recently returned to retire in Somalia. He invited us for a swim in 'his' pool, which had been quarried out as a water reservoir by the Chinese who had constructed the road earlier in the decade. While we were cooling off in the pool several women showed up carrying water containers, and were quite shocked to discover two Somalis and two European gentlemen swimming in the village water supply!"

"Our second long trip was to the south from 13 September to 8 October 1979. We drove south past Kismaayo, through Badhaadhe all the way to Kolbiyow on the Kenya border; then along the border to the coast, and up the coast to Raas Kaambooni and Buur Gaabo. Along the road between Kolbiyow and the coast we ran a line of 17 mist-nets straight down the middle of the road where it passed through the Boni Forest. All the birds caught were flying across the road

between Somalia and Kenya. Several new species for Somalia were trapped in the nets."

"The last long trip we made was along the Indian Ocean coast all the way to Tohen and Raas Caseyr (Cape Guardafui) from 15 April to 16 May 1980. At one point during this trip we drove for nearly two days without seeing a single other person. As with all three of our long trips I was the designated cook, an indication of how desperate we were for food! Whenever we could we supplemented this with food from small local restaurants. But after several days of finding nothing but plain boiled rice with sour camel milk John declared, in exasperation, 'Don't you people ever eat anything else?' A local man replied, 'The problem with you foreigners is that you don't know what you like. So you are always looking for something else to eat. We know what we like, so that is what we eat.' This was, of course, putting a rather too optimistic spin on the fact that there simply wasn't anything else to eat!"

"On the way we ran into a bit of a conundrum north-east of Warshiikh. We found two species of very similar larks; we assumed that the redder of the two was Somali Lark *Mirafra somalica*, but could not match the second, browner species to anything known from Somalia. Further north, where the soil turned red, we saw an even redder lark, which we realised was Somali Lark. This left us with two unidentified birds in the Warshiikh area. John returned there on 10 July 1981 and collected a series of both birds. After I skinned them they were sent to Tring, where the redder bird was described by Peter Colston as a new subspecies of Somali Lark *M. s. rochei*. Peter found that the browner bird was a new species and named it after John, *Mirafra ashi* or Ash's Lark."

Post-Somalia, John was sent to Uganda for a year before retiring to the New Forest in 1983. But a sedentary life was not for John and Jonquil, and they were soon off to Bali in Indonesia for an extended holiday. Here he continued to make important discoveries, including a previously undetected migration of small raptors between Java and Bali. In the mid 1980s, John made a series of visits to Nigeria to undertake survey work on behalf of the International Council for Bird Preservation (now BirdLife International), discovering a healthy population of Ibadan Malimbe *Malimbus ibadanensis* and the first evidence for Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes*



oreas in Nigeria, which subsequently led to the establishment of Cross River National Park. Phil Hall has written of John's time in Nigeria as follows:

"Whilst living in a remote forest community, he became almost like an adopted son of the village and, in fact, one of the chief's sons was named after him. During his sojourn there, he was brought several rings from European Barn Swallows [*Hirundo rustica*] and subsequent enquiries about these led to the identification of the biggest swallow roost in Africa, numbering up to three million birds."

"From Cross River State, he made his way to the south-west to Ibadan where he stayed at a large company guesthouse on the outskirts of the city. At the time of his visit, the Nigerian Conservation Foundation was hosting Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in his capacity as President of WWF. Erroneously, the residents of the compound were expecting a visit by the Prince and so laid on a major reception for him with all the ladies attired in long white gloves to welcome him. Eventually, John arrived totally bedraggled after several weeks in the bush, and they mistakenly assumed that this was the Prince. When they finally realised their mistake, they still felt that he had a royal air about him, being the gentleman that he was. John was totally oblivious to all the attention that he received and it was only afterwards that he understood what all the fanfare was about."

Other extended expeditions 'in retirement' took him to such places as the Maldives, Sudan, Oman and Saudi Arabia, as well as return visits to Uganda, Ethiopia and a final visit to Somalia in 2002 (together with John Miskell and Gerhard Nikolaus). During the 1990s he completed his

work on the Somali atlas, co-authored with John Miskell, and this was published as *Birds of Somalia* in 1998. He was awarded the BOU's Union Medal in 1997, and spent much of the following decade bringing his long-running atlas of Ethiopian birds to a conclusion. With much help from co-author John Atkins, it was finally published as *Birds of Ethiopia and Eritrea* in 2009, some 40 years after he commenced the project. These two fine works amply demonstrate his single-minded ambition to map the distribution of the birds of the Horn of Africa, and they will probably remain his crowning achievement.

John died on 6 January 2014, just three days after his wife Jonquil. I first corresponded with John some 25 years ago when I began sending him records of unusual birds in Ethiopia. He was a diligent correspondent, ever kind and probing, eager to make sure that I had not misidentified an out-of-range species. Later, I had the privilege to know John much better as the publisher of his two great atlases. Both were long, drawn-out affairs, but dealing with John was always a delight, even if he did have little regard for publishers' deadlines, and invariably phoned me on a Sunday evening believing it to be cheaper. Many words have been written about John's qualities and, amongst others, he will surely be remembered for his stamina, resourcefulness, diplomacy, energy, enthusiasm, good humour, generosity and kindness. Of all his many interests and discoveries, his contribution to our knowledge of the birds of the Horn of Africa stands out as an extraordinary achievement. We have much to thank him for and we will miss him.

*Nigel Redman (with thanks to John Miskell and Phil Hall for their contributions)*



## Jo Heigham: 1917–2014

Jo Heigham, who died at the age of 97 on 21 August 2014, will be remembered for his contribution to the ornithology of Nigeria. John Buckland Heigham was born in Cambridge, UK, on 10 August 1917. After World War II he moved to West Africa with his wife Phyllis (née Barron), at first as Deputy Commissioner of Labour in the Gold Coast (Ghana). In the late

1950s he transferred to Nigeria to work in the private sector as personnel manager, and for most of the time until the late 1970s he was based in Lagos. It was there that I first met Jo in 1968, and I benefited greatly from his kindness and organisational ability. He is best known as one of the five authors who updated John Elgood's *Birds of Nigeria* in 1994, but he also published several

useful papers, especially on the birds of Mid-West Nigeria (1976, based on 18 months at Sapele with African Timber & Plywood) and (with John Gee) the birds of Lagos (in 1977, after many years of residence there). He and Gee added two species to the Nigerian avifauna, Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio* and Lesser Grey Shrike *L. minor*, both obtained as specimens at Lagos.

From November 1977 to July 1984, Jo and Phyllis lived in Malawi, where Jo worked for

British American Tobacco. They continued to take an active interest in birds and Jo's local discoveries included the first breeding Rock Pratincoles *Glareola nuchalis* in the country, on the middle Shire River. Birders were sure of a friendly welcome in Limbe, and Françoise and I were especially pleased to meet with them there.

Robert J. Dowsett

## Jacques Verschuren: 1926–2014

Few people have made such a considerable contribution to conservation and research in central Africa as did Jacques C. F. Verschuren, who died at Forest, near Brussels, on 20 August 2014. At various times, he held the posts of chief biologist and director of national parks in what was then Belgian Congo, and honours included the Gold Medal of the World Wildlife Fund (he was one of the first recipients, in 1970). Born at Etterbeek in Belgium on 9 April 1926, Jacques visited the Congo for the first time in 1948 while still a student. Having obtained a doctorate in science, he returned to Parc National de la Garamba in 1950 to undertake intensive field work, in particular there and in Parc National Albert. This research, part of a multi-disciplinary study, resulted in important publications by Jacques on bats of Garamba and Albert (he was a

keen speleologist), and the mammals and birds of several national parks.

In the 1960s he became more widely involved in wildlife conservation in eastern Africa. A memorial fund had been set up in memory of Michael Grzimek, and a research centre established near Seronera in the Serengeti (Tanzania), under Jacques' direction. He did much to support the research of others, and was one of those responsible for encouraging Dian Fossey to study the gorillas of the Virunga volcanoes. Jacques travelled widely in later years, and undertook a number of advisory investigations for IUCN, such as his recommendations for wildlife conservation and national parks in Liberia. He was a courteous and approachable person, and his passing will be regretted by numerous African and expatriate conservationists.

Robert J. Dowsett



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## Notes for Contributors

The *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* welcomes original contributions on all aspects of the birds of Africa, here defined as the area covered by Collar, N. J. & Stuart, S. N. 1985. *Threatened Birds of Africa and Related Islands: The ICBP/IUCN Red Data Book*. Cambridge, UK: International Council for Bird Preservation, namely continental Africa, Indian Ocean islands west of 80°E, e.g. Madagascar, the Mascarene Islands and Socotra; Atlantic Ocean islands on or east of the mid-Atlantic ridge, e.g. the Tristan da Cunha group, the Azores and the Canaries. Contributions will

be accepted subject to editing and refereeing by independent reviewers, where appropriate. The Editorial Team will be happy to advise authors on the acceptability of material at draft stage if desired.

### Submissions

Submissions are accepted in English or French and should be sent by e-mail to [editor@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:editor@africanbirdclub.org). All submissions are acknowledged. French summaries are required for all papers published in English, and vice versa. Those submitting papers should supply a summary for

translation into English, or French, as appropriate. Unless a sketch map is provided as part of the article, place names should follow those on standard or readily available maps (preferably a recent edition of *The Times Atlas of the World*).

### Style

Authors are requested to follow conventions used in the *Bulletin of the African Bird Club* and to refer to a recent issue for guidance. A detailed style guide can be obtained on request from the Editor.





## African Bird Club Country Representatives

**The role of the Representatives** ABC Representatives support existing members by providing a local point of contact in their region and amongst other things: answer queries about the Club; solicit submissions for the Bulletin; arrange local meetings; recruit new members. They also have an important role in identifying projects that could benefit from the ABC Conservation Fund and candidates for the Supported Membership scheme.

**Interested in becoming a Representative?** We are seeking new Representatives in a number of countries. If you are interested in supporting and promoting ABC in your country please contact the Country Representatives' Coordinator ([reps@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:reps@africanbirdclub.org)) attaching a CV and a statement of how you think you can develop the role. The Coordinator will be happy to provide further information if required.

### Current Country Representatives

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### Countries requiring Representatives

We are currently seeking Country Representatives for: Algeria, Angola, Azores, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde Islands, Chad, Comoros & Mayotte, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Madeira, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Netherlands, Niger, Réunion, Rodriguez, São Tomé & Príncipe, Sierra Leone, Socotra, Somalia, St Helena, Sudan, Togo and Tristan da Cunha.

### Supported and Affiliated Membership

The Supporting Members scheme is a key part of the Club's strategy of encouraging the spread of knowledge and understanding of birds as widely as possible throughout Africa. The scheme enables Africans who would not otherwise have the resources to join, to become members of the Club. The scheme is funded by Supporting Members who pay a minimum of UK£30 to cover their own membership and the subscription of at least one African member. The money they contribute over and above their own subscription is placed in a special fund that is used to cover the membership expenses of African members whom they may have nominated, or who have been nominated by other Club members.

Although we have suggested a minimum of UK£30 to become a Supporting Member, any contribution is welcome. All members of the Club, even if they do not feel able to become Supporting Members themselves, are invited to nominate candidates for supported memberships. Candidates should be nationals of an African country, with a genuine interest in wild birds but without the resources to become members in their own right. Africans who think they may qualify are very welcome to put their own

names forward, supported by a letter of recommendation from someone such as their employer, teacher or an officeholder in a local wildlife organisation.

The scheme now also includes clubs who wish to be affiliated with the African Bird Club in African countries where it is difficult for local individuals to become members in their own right. Clubs accepted for membership under the scheme receive up to six copies of each issue of the bulletin for circulation among their members. Instead of paying a membership fee, Clubs are asked to provide a short annual report on their activities that may be published in the bulletin. Clubs interested in becoming Affiliated Member Clubs are invited to apply to the ABC Secretary giving details of their membership, their constitution or a statement of their objectives and conditions of their membership, and their activities to date.

### ABC Information Service

ABC offers a service to help members with information requests. Perhaps you are planning a trip to Africa and need local advice, or maybe you are in search of an obscure fact about an African species. The Club does not guarantee

to find all the answers but will try to help. The service is free to ABC members. Contact: Phil Hyde. E-mail: [info@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:info@africanbirdclub.org).

### AfricanBirding e-mail discussion list

Launched, in October 2000, by the ABC and the Pan-African Ornithological Congress, AfricanBirding or AB, as it is known, has become a useful forum for those interested in African birds. To join the discussion, which averages 1-2 messages a day, send a blank e-mail to [AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:AfricanBirding-subscribe@yahoogroups.com). You will then receive an e-mail instructing you how to join.

The Club also maintains a list of members' e-mail addresses. This list is confidential and used only for Club purposes, e.g. for informing members of upcoming events and news concerning the Club. It is not divulged to anybody outside the Club or used for commercial advertising. At present it includes addresses for about 50% of the membership. Please send any additions or amendments to the Membership Secretary: [membership@africanbirdclub.org](mailto:membership@africanbirdclub.org).



